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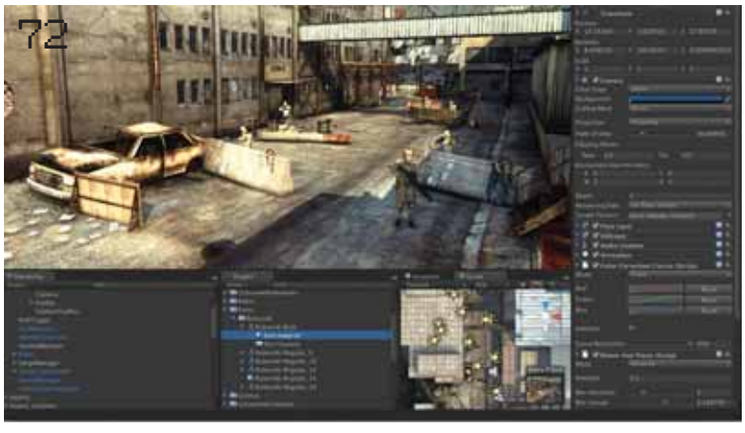

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Just a colleague checking his notes? Or a member of your assault team desperately reloading before they're annihilated?
Sometimes that line between the gaming world and real world can become a bit blurred. We know what it's like, because as award-winning games recruiters we're just as obsessed as you are. It's our understanding of your world that has seen us attract some of the best gaming people around, as well as enjoy exclusive relationships with a host of big name developers and publishers.
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Italian dev sector now 'a major international force'

A 'confident and expanding' national industry to be showcased at the Italian Videogame Developers Conference

by Will Freeman

ITALY'S DEVELOPMENT sector is currently enjoying a period of significant growth and buoyancy.

That's according to the organisers of this month's Italian Videogame Developers Conference.

The conference itself takes place from Friday, December 3rd to Saturday, December 4th at Rome's Luiss University Main Hall.

The IVDC's organisers are also confident that this year's show vastly improves on the 2009 event. Now in its third year, the IVDC has moved from Milan.

"[At the IVDC] you will come into contact with a confident and expanding Italian games market and development scene, which will be extremely interesting and insightful from an international point of view," said president of the IVDC Marco Accordi Rickards.

"We are very excited with the potential and prospects for companies working in the Italian video games industry – many of which will be featured at this year's IVDC conference. Over the coming years Italy will become a major international force."

"We've made a huge leap from last year's IVDC to this one," insisted Rickards.

"Rome, for example, offers greater opportunities like having Governmental

"At the IVDC you will come into contact with a confident and expanding Italian games market and development scene."
Marco Accordi Rickards, IVDC

speakers at the event detailing their support for the Italian games industry. The programme is also more internationally-oriented with a number of star developers speaking at the conference, and a brand new consumer area called IVDC Play."

Lionhead's Peter Molyneux, Crytek founder Avni Yerli and industry figurehead Phil Harrison are all set to speak at the free-to-attend event, along with a number of representatives from the Italian Industry, including Milestone, Artematica and SpinVector. In an attempt to broaden global appeal, English is the IVDC's 'official language', and will be used throughout the panels and sessions.

Meanwhile, the IVDC Play element welcomes the wider public to a special consumer area of the show.

"We're very excited with IVDC Play as it broadens the appeal of the event and – whereas we're helping to push the Italian and international industry debates forward – at our core we want to bring in aspiring game developers to the industry," confirmed Rickards.

The IVDC Digital programme is also set to run alongside the main conference schedule, offering a number of tailored workshops and sessions, and a special roundtable addressing new markets for games.

The European Game Developers Federation is also preparing to address attendees of the IVDC.

More information on attending can be found at the IVDC's official website. **www.ivdconf.com**

Editorial

"Leave the triple-A games to Canada. It's territory lost that the UK can't win back."

THERE'S A bunch of people who I am sure this month's cover story will rankle. Good.

For all the championing everyone in the UK games development sector has done – even *Develop* through our increasingly popular Industry Excellence Awards, which services all of Europe – it's clear that Great Britain ain't so great on the global stage we once dominated.

It's not just a 'the writing's on the wall' scenario. The facts bear this out. Tiga's recent census of the UK sector shows that half of the jobs lost in the UK went overseas, three-quarters of them to Canada.

Some more anecdotal context: our 'Six Reasons Why Canada Thrives As UK Shrinks' mini-feature on p43 wasn't a stretch to put together, it tripped off the tongue given the many positive things Canadian patriots (many of them UK ex-pats) relayed to us in the 20 pages after.

So yes, a long list of games that includes *Assassin's Creed*, *Splinter Cell* and *Mass Effect* proves a new fact of life; the UK just can't cut it in the big boy league of traditional games. *APB* killed RTW. *Enslaved* was effectively a flop. Even this month's diamond releases that show the strength of UK development are the new Bond games by Bizarre and Eurocom – games ultimately based on a sure-thing licence and bankrolled by the richest publisher in the world. Yes, there's *Fable*, *Batman* or *GTA* – but they are exceptions to rule.

But you know what? Let's leave the triple-A games to Canada. It's territory lost that we just can't win back.

Despite this, the dynamism that defined the UK industry's strengths on fixed platforms in the '80s, '90s and '00s – Spectrum, SNES or PS2 – hasn't disappeared. But it has moved on. The exciting UK companies aren't the 100-man studios pumping out 360 games, it's nimbler non-traditional outfits. Moshi, Hello Games, Wonderland, Six to Start… Just ask EA: it's the one that spent $500m in 12 months to buy iPhone and Facebook stars from London and Macclesfield.

UK developers, those that want to stay in the game in the UK, need to start preparing themselves for these arenas – if they aren't already – and fast.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Bond devs: Games

Bizarre and Eurocom claim upcoming 007 titles prove that the games

by James Batchelor

VIDEO GAMES can do more than complement film franchises – they can add to them as well.

That's the belief of Bizarre and Eurocom, the two studios working on Activision's upcoming games *James Bond 007: Blood Stone* and *GoldenEye 007*.

Financial troubles at MGM have indefinitely delayed the next Bond film – and the UK developers believe this is the perfect time to show that the games industry can carry the torch in Hollywood's stead.

"It's an interesting exercise to see if the fans can embrace a game as much as they would a new film," Bizarre's Nick Davies, producer for *Blood Stone,* told Develop.

"Ideally, we want people to talk about *Blood Stone* as part of the Bond chronology. The films translate so well to games because they're action packed and full of a variety that lend themselves very naturally to the game form."

Activision's executive producer for sister title *GoldenEye 007* Julian Widdows added: "It's an opportunity to show that video games can give people a different way of accessing the universe," says Widdows.

"Our *GoldenEye* is not trying to be a film. It has had all of these people involved, but involved in a way that helps us create a real video game, not an interactive film. There's a very important distinction there.

"And it's quite fortunate for us that there isn't a film out, because it gives this game its own breathing space."

The two games boast expensive production values, with plenty of cinematic talent supporting both Bizarre and Eurocom.

Each title features the voices and likeness of current Bond Daniel Craig and Dame Judi Dench, who plays M. They also follow storylines written by Bruce Feirstein, the veteran Bond writer who penned *GoldenEye* and *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

Eurocom's *GoldenEye 007* is a reimagining of both the

can fill the Hollywood void

industry can sustain the iconic movie series in the absence of next James Bond film

Right: Blood Stone producer Nick Davis hopes his game will be accepted as part of the main Bond canon

original game and the 1995 movie, with a brand new musical score written by the series' composer David Arnold.

Meanwhile, *Blood Stone* features takedowns stunts that were motion-captured using Daniel Craig's stunt co-ordinator Ben Cooke, while singer Joss Stone provides the title theme – as well as starring as the Bizarre game's Bond girl.

Publisher Activision was keen to employ a film-like strategy to developing both *Blood Stone* and *GoldenEye,* in order to prove how well games can stand up alongside the classic films.

> ***"Our GoldenEye is not trying to be a film. It's quite fortunate for us that there isn't a film out, because it gives this game its own breathing space."***
>
> Julian Widdows, Activision

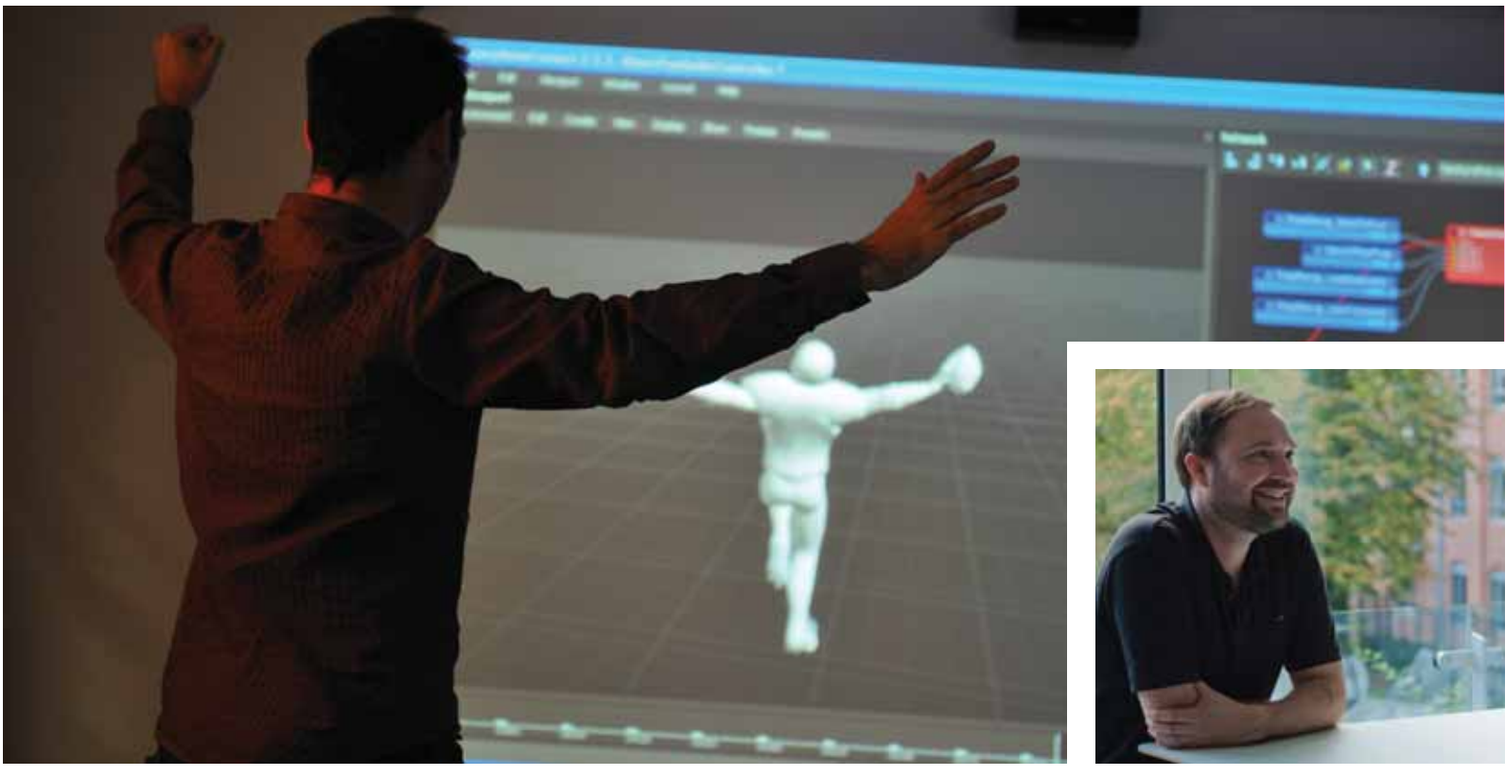
The firm's general manager for its licensed business unit in Europe David Tyler said: "Our goal was always to handle them as though they were additions to *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace.* Interactive entertainment can be an extension of a license.

"We feel like we've done exactly that this year by working with Bruce Feirstein to pen the stories for both games – his presence alone adds a level of legitimacy to the games for hardcore fans. Those are essentially original Bond scripts that live on their own.

"Without a movie this year, the games are the only way real Bond fans can immerse themselves into a James Bond adventure. They really stand on their own as true entries into the main Bond universe."

Animating Kinect

The arrival of Kinect represents a significant challenge for animators. NaturalMotion's CEO Torsten Reil tells **Rob Crossley** how the company has responded to the new platform with a specially created Morpheme module…



Above: The new Kinect Morpheme module in action and (right) NaturalMotion CEO Torsten Reil

Why introduce your Kinect module?
Kinect for Xbox 360 represents a completely new way to interact with your game. To make this kind of technology really shine, you have to integrate it seamlessly into your game animation system.

This is what our Kinect module for Morpheme does. It means that animators and programmers can graphically author how Kinect data is used on their characters, and it allows them to use all the features in Morpheme like physics, IK, or advanced blends. What's also cool is that you can prototype Kinect game ideas or controls quickly in Morpheme without having to get a dedicated engine going.

How does the tool work, in terms of Kinect detecting motion and that being translated to game animation?
The Kinect system runs live alongside our Morpheme runtime engine. The Kinect module in the Morpheme runtime retargets the live motion data onto your character and from there can be treated like any other animation data. For authoring, our Morpheme Connect tool presents a simple Kinect drag and drop node in the animation blend tree. This means, for example, you can apply Kinect to only the upper part of your character, whilst the lower part is driven by a walk cycle. Or you use the player's shoulder tilt to drive the direction of the walk cycle.

Microsoft provides this technology itself. Why pay for more?
Microsoft provides the Kinect technology, SDK and core dev tools. NaturalMotion provides two important pieces to use Kinect in a game.

Firstly dedicated Kinect algorithms for retargeting and noise reduction.

Secondly there's a tight integration into a graphically authorable animation engine. In our experience, both are required to get the most out of a live motion input system.

> ***"The Kinect module in the Morpheme runtime retargets the live motion data onto your character and can then be treated like any animation data."***
>
> Torsten Reil, NaturalMotion

What has the feedback from Microsoft been like?
Great – Microsoft has been very supportive from day one, both in terms of sending us hardware, as well as using and testing our technology over the past few months. It's clear that Kinect is crucial to Microsoft's Xbox strategy, and it's great to see how it's supporting the development and tech ecosystem around it.

What is the key benefit of this tool for animators? Does is it take workload away from programmers?
Yes, the key benefit is that animators can control how live body motion is integrated into their animation networks – a key component in creating immersive live motion experiences.

Equally, programmers benefit from ready-made motion processing algorithms, such as retargeting and noise-reduction algorithms.

Is the module competitively priced? How many studios are you hoping to adopt the tech in two years?
Kinect for Morpheme is very cost effective in terms of the time and money it saves both compared to creating a similar solution in-house, as well as in terms of sheer reduction in iteration time.

The tech has already been deployed in multiple studios, so we're very optimistic for the months ahead.

Who's your intended market? Independent studios?
It's both publishers and independent studios. Right now, we probably have a few more of the former than the latter, but that mainly reflects hardware availability.

If developers use Morpheme's animation module do you think it can improve lag times in play?
Lag times in Kinect are just not a problem with the right filtering algorithms, and with judicious use of motion input in different situations.

Morpheme helps with both, and it lets animators and programmers adjust and experiment with all the necessary settings graphically.
www.naturalmotion.com

RED 5 STUDIOS

USES MORPHEME

"In Firefall, we are creating a futuristic and fantastical world, but believability remains a priority. If you cut corners when it comes to animation, you are betraying the vision of your game. Morpheme lets us meet our high standards of quality while maintaining a very efficient pipeline."

Mark Kern, Founder and CEO of Red 5 Studios

RED 5 STUDIOS

FIREFALL

morpheme
advanced animation system

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www.naturalmotion.com

WorldView

Our digest of the past month's global games news…

DEALS

Japanese studio **Level-5** is working with **Capcom** to build a crossover game featuring both Professor Layton and Phoenix Wright - set for release on Nintendo's upcoming 3DS handheld.

Chipmaker giant **Intel** has invested $3 million in **Aurora Feint**, makers of the OpenFeint social platform for mobile apps.

Facebook has chosen **PlaySpan**'s Ultimate Pay monetisation solutions as a new method of purchasing Facebook Credits in social games.

San Francisco-based casual games group **PlayFirst** has raised $9.2m in financing from a range of VC firms including **Mayfield Fund** and **Trinity Partners**.

Californian studio **Sperasoft** has licensed **Fork Particle**'s SDK middleware for its upcoming, as yet unannounced, project.

EA has acquired iPhone publisher **Chillingo** in a deal thought to be worth around $20 million.

Canadian mobile game studio **Ludia** will sell a controlling 51 per cent share of the company to **RTL Group**.

ANOTHER £10M GRANT FOR CANADIAN STUDIOS

The Canadian game industry has received another luxurious multi-million dollar investment from its government, in what is a further demonstration of how the country's game developers are thriving on the world stage.

The Canada Media Fund this month granted £8 million to twenty-seven tech companies – twelve of which are game developers. Over £6.5 million remains in the fund for a subsequent investment round, which is currently being considered for new applicants.

The princely financial support underlines how central the game industry is considered to Canada's digital economy. The nation is widely considered to have set a global master template for supporting its development studios – a model which the UK is despairingly at odds with.

Canada offers game development tax breaks in three regions, saving as much as 40 per cent on production costs.

www.cmf-fmc.ca

JAPAN/USA

JAPANESE GIANT BUYS NGMOCO FOR $400M

Japanese social game firm DeNA has completed a $400 million buyout of Californian group Ngmoco.

The deal is one of the most costly in the mobile game space, indicative perhaps of Ngmoco's success on the App Store and Android Market.

"The big tide in social gaming is coming, right now," said DeNA CEO Tomoko Namba.

"We'd like to capture it and quickly become the world's No.1 mobile gaming platform.

"We're only active in the Japanese market, and we haven't figured out how to cover the Western market.

"We want to enable developers to go cross-device, and to go cross-border. And we need this to happen quickly, in about the next one or two years."

www.ngmoco.com

FINLAND

ANGRY BIRDS FLYING ON ANDROID MARKET

Rovio, the Finnish studio that realised the App Store dream of turning an indie studio into a world-conquering money-maker, has found new success on Android devices.

The studio that saw its full-price *Angry Birds* game downloaded nearly seven million times on Apple's App Store, has now passed two million downloads on google's own Android Market for smartphones.

"Another day, another million," read a post by Rovio on social networking site Twitter.

Rovio previously revealed that the first million *Angry Birds* downloaded on Android was achieved in less than 24 hours.

www.rovio.com

AUSTRALIA

KROME FACED AGAIN WITH CLOSURE AND LAYOFF CLAIM

Australia's prominent game studio and one of the biggest independent dev outfits in the world has again faced rumours of commercial breakdown.

The latest claim – that Krome has in fact closed completely – has arrived a few weeks after the company's CEO hit out at the media for speculating and "exaggerating" on rumours of layoffs.

"What's real and those stories in the press are two different things," Robert Walsh said.

On the latest claims, Krome declined to respond to requests for comment.

Various connected individuals said on social networking site Twitter that the rumours were accurate.

www.kromestudios.com

INDONESIA

INDONESIAN, 12, DEVELOPS NOKIA APPS

Nokia has been flaunting Fahma Waluya Rosmansyah, a 12 year-old Indonesian boy who creates games and apps that helps other kids learn English and maths.

His output is quite prodigious – the lad was encoding Flash in the fifth grade, before graduating that same year to create an app called BAHAMA for the Nokia E71, which taught the alphabet, counting and colours.

www.nokia.com/developers

USA

LANGDELL EDGED OUT

Tim Langdell has informed all licencees of his old 'edge' trademark that he no longer has legal ownership of the now-infamous name.

A United States district judge made the order at the very end of what had been the most damaging and humiliating week in Langdell's controversial career.

In what resembled a swift mafia-like 'clean-up' job, District Judge William Alsup told the United States Patent and Trademark Office to cancel all of Langdell's 'edge' trademarks, and told the man himself to inform his licencees – those who've already fallen victim to his pugnacious 'trademark trolling' – that his power has been dissolved completely.

It leaves Langdell bereft of a reliable source of income, stung by legal costs, and in danger of criminal convictions.

A legal fight with EA over the *Mirror's Edge* trademark, though embarked on with Langdell's typical confidence, marked the beginning of the end for the retired game developer.

www.chaosedge.wordpress.com

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Our online resource features news, analysis and commentary posted daily, and is available via the web, mobile, RSS and daily email and news alert blasts.

THQ: WE'D HAVE LOOKED PAST CANADA

One of the industry's biggest publishers has put into bleak perspective the link between employment, investment, new studios and tax breaks in the UK.

Danny Bilson, THQ's executive VP for core games, announced this month the opening of its new mega-studio in Canada's subsidy-supported Quebec region, which is expected to create 400 new jobs, in five years.

And if the UK government hadn't scrapped plans for game tax breaks, he says, THQ would have considered opening its studio in Britain.

"It's all about money," Bilson said.

"There's no issue with talent; it's just economics - and if the government finds subsidies there, absolutely we would build out.

"I wish that Los Angeles or California would give us 37.5 per cent [tax break] on the labour; then we'd be building out here. If it was in Manchester we'd be building out there. If it was in Lyon, we'd be building out there."

Tiga CEO Richard Wilson urged the UK Coalition to act now on tax breaks in light of the claims.

"We are losing in a global battle," he said.

careers.thq.com

NORDIC EUROPE

NORDIC FUND INSPIRES AND WORRIES ORGANISER

Competition in this year's Nordic Game Program has far exceeded expectations for the organisers of the initiative.

As many as 136 projects have been submitted for a share of the remaining £350,000 in the fund, which will ultimately be split between just six.

The 136 brings the total number of applicants this year to 228 – a figure which the head of Nordic Game said he is both proud of and worried by.

"The number of projects has increased by 50 per cent from the last round," Erik Robertson said.

"This staggering figure, about four times what we planned for, proves that the Nordic games industry is still very much expanding, but also that it is impossible for the funding scheme to meet the growing demand".

www.nordicgameprogram.org

CANADA

'MASS LAYOFFS' AS PROPAGANDA AXES GAME

Disney is rumoured to have handed redundancy notices to as many as 100 staff at Canadian outfit Propaganda Games.

Disney confirmed the layoffs, though did not disclose how many were affected.

The downsizing is a result of Disney axing the *Pirates of Caribbean* project.

www.propagandagames.go.com

UK

TORIES TO AXE RDAS...

The enormity of challenge facing the UK Government is now being put into bleak perspective by brutal measures to eliminate Britain's budget deficit.

In what was, in reality, a footnote to extraordinary spending review cuts, Chancellor George Osborne confirmed the UK will close its Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) as part of a wider plan to save money on the masses of quangos dotted across the UK. As much as £270 million of the public's money is hoped will be saved by axing the RDAs – yet at least five of these, and ikely more, have routinely funded and promoted the games industry.

"RDAs will be abolished and functions which are to be retained will be transferred to central or local government, and others," read a cross-departmental document.

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

UK

...BUT NESTA IS SPARED

NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts has been granted full independence from the UK Government.

According to the official document detailing the 'quango cull', NESTA is to 'seek to establish as an independent charity'. It's endowment is to be held in a separate trust.

"The NESTA Board welcomes this decision," said Sir John Chisholm, NESTA's chairman.

www.nesta.org.uk

SAY WHAT?!?

"A mess."

But is it magical? Apple CEO Steve Jobs nutshells Android game development, claiming Tweetdeck devs had troubles.

"Did we at any point say it was a nightmare developing on Android? Errr nope."

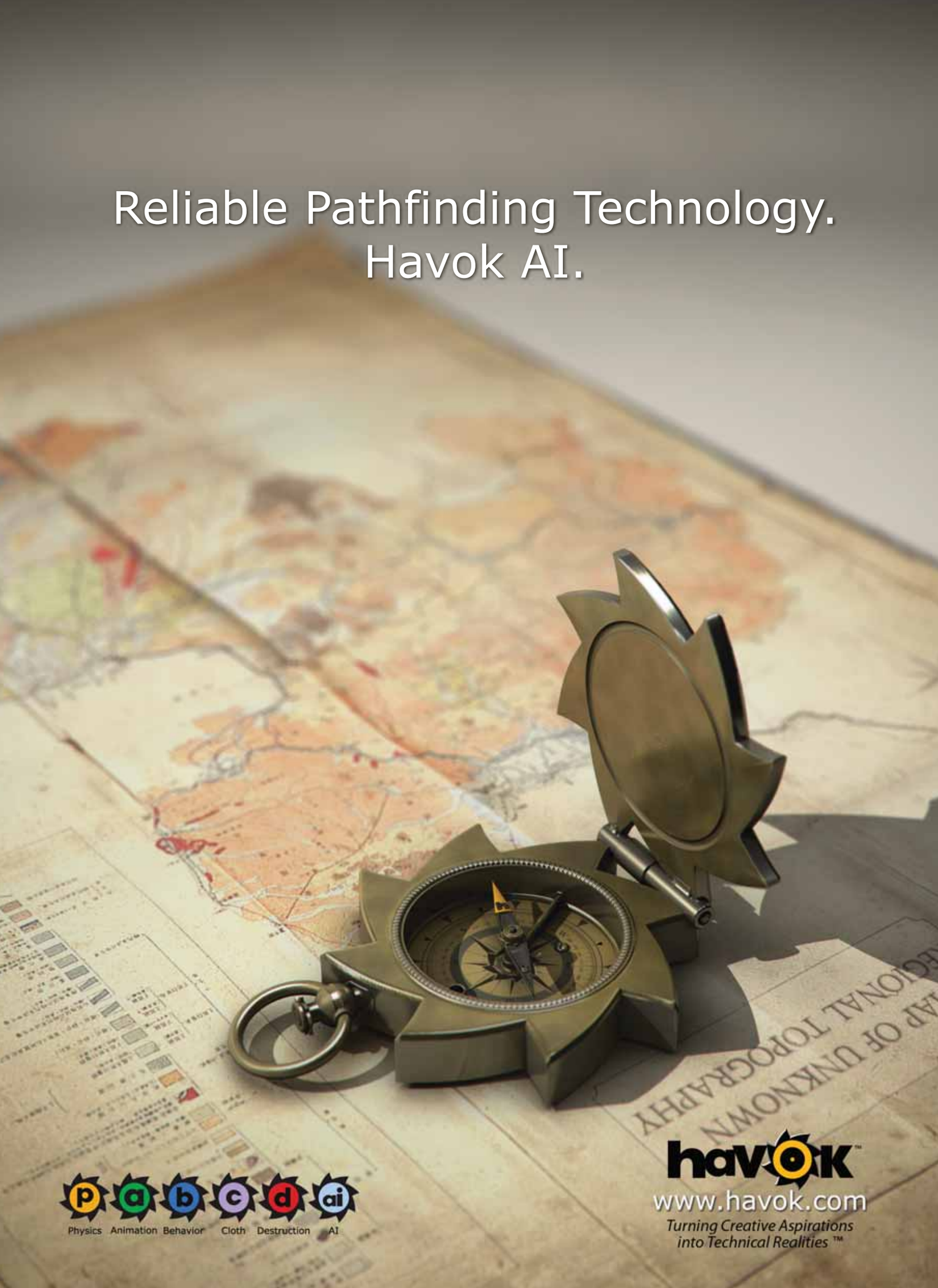
Jobs ProTip: If you're going to make assumptions about someone, perhaps the creator of Tweetdeck might have some kind of way to publicly respond?

"That was a joke!"

See! Bobby Kotick was simply excercising his famously dry sense of humour when talking about "taking the fun out of game development".

"A monstrous majority of those buying games with an Online Pass are getting something for free. People see it as a plus, I think."

Oh, Peter Moore, what would Steve Jobs say about such an unprepared corporate line? "A mess" ?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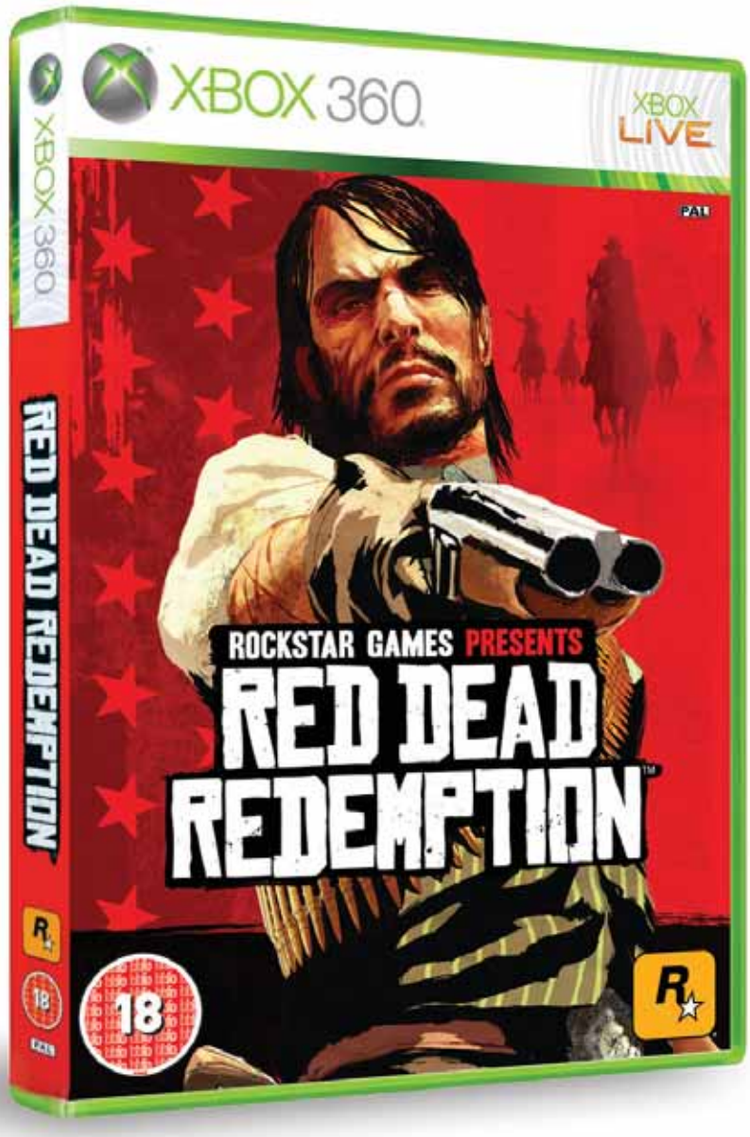
ANATOMY OF A BLOCKBUSTER

Our monthly dissection of a recent hit game...

Red Dead Redemption

PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
STUDIO: Rockstar San Diego
FORMAT: Playstation 3, Xbox 360
PRICE: £49.99
CHART SUCCESS: Five weeks at UK number one
www.rockstargames.com



Rockstar's Western epic succeeds in making an adored, if tired, cultural archetype feel fresh and exciting

THE SENSATION

Despite having one of the most pervasive pre-release marketing campaigns a Rockstar game has yet received, there were those who had no faith in *Red Dead Redemption's* power.

Analysts pointed to a lack of heavy-duty in-game firepower as a likely sore point for those weaned on titles of the likes of *Call of Duty* and *Halo*. Other Western-themed games before it had failed to achieve the lofty heights expected of the classic genre, arguably including *Red Dead Redemption's* own precursor, *Red Dead Revolver*.

Those concerns were proven more than unfounded on the game's release, however. Racking up a Metacritic score of 95 per cent and selling over two million units in its first two months of release alone, *Red Dead Redemption* became one of the biggest selling games of 2010.

THE GAME

A desperate anti-hero with a troubled past. The heartless G-Men threatening his loved-ones. The old gang members at large in an epic landscape. *Red Dead Redemption's* plot reads like an amalgamation of all the best bits of every great Western film ever produced. Add to that a score that would have made Ennio Morricone proud; and performances of a quality rarely found in modern Hollywood blockbusters, and you have the makings of something very special.

In terms of gameplay, the mixture of firefights, brawls, horse races and hunting quests across burning deserts and grassy plains kept the focus fresh throughout the 25 to 30 hours of gameplay.

Throw in an online multiplayer with an ever-expanding series of game types and some of the most creative use of DLC yet seen in video games, and that special something gets acutely realised.

THE STUDIO

Rockstar San Diego, having outside of *Red Dead Revolver* only worked on racing titles like *Midnight Club* and the weirdly brilliant *Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis*, really outdid themselves on this title. Its staff certainly went beyond the call of duty during the game's notorious crunch period, the fallout from which showed the ease with which Rockstar studios worldwide can pull together; you can really feel the Rockstar/*GTA* qualities in the game. Not a surprise given the franchises share an exec producer, Rockstar North boss Leslie Benzies.

UNIQUE SELLING POINT

Westerns by their very nature are nothing new, and even in the relatively young medium of video games this statement holds true. Since *The Oregon Trail* in the early 1970s, the old American frontier has been a recurring inspiration for developers. The tendency for the games they made has generally been to keep to a formal liniarity; represent the awesome geography of the West with smoke and mirrors, but to keep the player at a distance from the distance.

The primal appeal of *Red Dead Redemption* is simple. See that vast, impossible-looking rock formation just on the brink of the horizon? Get on your horse, cowboy, and lets see what's happening over there.

WHY IT WORKS

The allure of Rockstar's games is the opportunity to play through archetypal situations in fiction. In the *GTA* series, the visceral sex-appeal of crime and vice in an urban environment, as-seen in *Scarface* and *Heat*, can be experienced first-hand. In the *Midnight Club* series, street racing culture is made accessible to the millions of people who cannot afford to get involved with the real thing, be it financially or morally.

Red Dead Redemption? To ride alone into the sunset, the bad guy dead, the maiden's virtue intact, the towns-folk safe – these things represent the heroic ideal that every fan of Westerns has aspired to at some point. Inversely, to kill the good guy, steal the maiden and raze the town to the ground is also pretty fun. In John Marston players find the cypher for their own heroic or villainous fantasies. His story is the player's story, and his fate is all the more important because of it.

TRY IT YOURSELF

The gruff private detective. The killer with a heart. The soldier with a past. Stereotypes all, but when well developed and granted free-reign over a world at once familiar yet distinct, players will fill in the gaps and create an unforgettable character that will never mean the same thing to any two individuals.

What makes you tick? What is your favourite film, TV show or book? How cool would it be to experience that fiction in video game form? And remember – the old stories are always the best.

COMMENT: BUSINESS

When clusters implode

by Rick Gibson, Games Investor Consulting

Above: How Dundee's dev scene will adjust to the Realtime Worlds closure is a topic of much debate

When big studios like Realtime Worlds suddenly switch their lights off, the industry collectively shudders, blusters about probable cause, crosses itself and gets back to business.

Post-mortems range from the uninformed (failure of business model – patently wrong as many similar companies would kill for *APB's* ARPPUs), personalised (it's always management's fault) to astute (most triple-A MMOGs with console production values fail), pragmatic (quality dampened retail performance killing funding) or unvarnished (*APB* was heavily over-engineered compared to direct competitors). But why do some clusters collapse where others survive, what's the long term impact of losing that many staff on Dundee, and what are the prospects for those let go?

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

At the heart of the industry's biggest clusters – Seattle, Montreal, Vancouver and San Francisco – are giant studios training talent in the latest development technology and processes. Since most of these powerhouses are publisher-owned or are publishers in their own right, they typically have the scale to attract talent from afar, which in turn attracts other companies. Eventually some staff spin out, diversifying the cluster. The locale often provides start-ups with seasoned non-execs to add strategic clout, reassured investors and eventually, sometimes, broker sales. When acquired, these studios close the virtuous circle by delivering cutting edge creativity and technology back into publisher studios, whose innovation is commonly evolutionary not revolutionary.

Our industry needs the balance and interplay between publishers and independents. They provide services, a talent pool and business opportunities to each other, as well as trigger subtler interactions between creative business people.

Many clusters have grown and benefitted from cross-fertilisation from adjacent industries, most notably film in Vancouver, and Silicon Valley in San Francisco. London now has numerous games companies from new media agency-land, making it the UK's largest cluster by number of studios and headcount.

COME TOGETHER

Large publisher studios in your cluster are the best defence against shocks like Realtime Worlds, whose demise robbed Dundee of over 60 per cent of its full time staff. Many of these newly-available top-flight developers are being scooped up by other studios, but the UK overall is still losing headcount. Dundee itself now has under 160 development staff in full time roles in twenty-odd small-to-medium sized companies, which no longer enjoy spill-overs from a well-funded giant studio.

> ***"Since 2008, UK-based studios have tightened their belts, shedding nearly nine per cent of the UK's full-time developer headcount."***

There's no doubt that the cluster would be in much deeper trouble without Abertay, which provides a degree of safe haven during storms, housing developers and providing funding and staff.

Dundee's local funding environment, while better than most due to local benefactors and the new prototype fund, isn't quite at the level to trigger multiple new start-ups. Finance is the other key to many clusters' success. This financing is not universally sourced from public bodies. Canada may pump-prime to attract global publisher studios but the privately funded clusters of Los Angeles, Hamburg and San Francisco arguably create more long-term value by incubating indigenous studios.

Whether clusters and newly redundant staff bounce back from such redundancy shocks is driven too by timing. During the last collapse in developer numbers in the early-to-mid 2000s, many staff, with fewer jobs to go around, left the UK or the industry altogether. Three-to-four years ago studios were growing but faced recruitment shortages, so many released staff were absorbed by companies relieved to find experienced people. Since 2008, UK-based studios have tightened their belts, shedding nearly nine per cent of the UK's full-time developer headcount.

What about these new routes to markets with lower barriers to entry? Let's not overstate it: perhaps ten per cent of UK staff made redundant since 2008 went on to found companies. But, since then we've tracked well over one hundred start-up studios in the UK, whose fate correlates strongly with platform choice.

iPhone companies have mostly struggled while browser game studios have thrived. The North East lost many start-ups which almost exclusively chose iPhone, but failed to find a market. Start-ups in the South East have tended towards Flash and Facebook, with a greater proportion surviving, so far.

After the RTW recruitment auction, a minority may leave gaming, but in a global industry with a highly mobile workforce, many will use this as the opportunity to work for overseas games companies.

Data is hard to gather, but TIGA's late 2009 survey found that half of studios' lost jobs went overseas, 72 per cent of them to Canada. Perhaps globalisation can rescue such staff. I'm as unhappy with the UK's decline as anyone but recognise that looking out for number one may mean taking our focus overseas.

What will happen to Dundee? It may be down but it's not out. Local studios like Proper Games, Tag, Dynamo and Digital Goldfish are still going strong, and with Rockstar down the road, Scotland is still a top games development destination.

Rick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries. **www.gamesinvestor.com**

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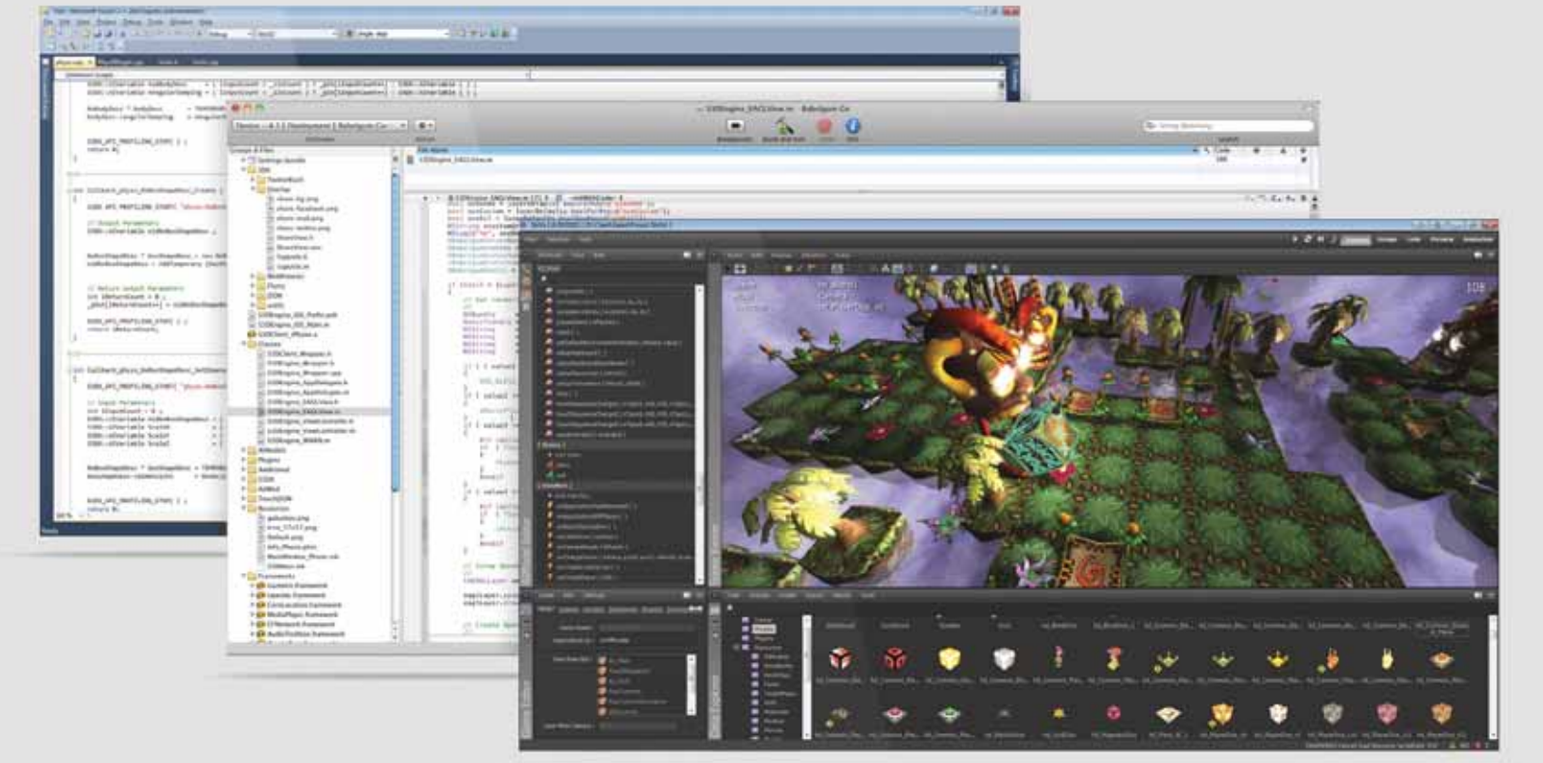

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COMMENT: DESIGN

3 Screens, 1 Cloud

by **Billy Thomson,** Ruffian Games

Any first party game developer working with one of the current console manufacturers will know that this partnership comes with some massive benefits. However, they will also know that along with these advantages they are also expected to make sure that their game commits to as many of the publisher's first party strategic goals as possible as it tries to ensure they lead the way in the console war.

That's something evident since our publisher Microsoft Games Studios has implemented the 'three screens and the cloud' strategy that was unveiled to the public back in 2009. The three screens are the TV, the PC and the mobile device or smart phone, while the cloud represents data stored online. Microsoft announced that they envisioned a future where any Windows device would create a persistent, shared, connected experience allowing people access to their personal data, information, and services across all three screens and the cloud.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS?

For Microsoft this strategy is not aimed directly at games, the goal is to connect each of the screens and the cloud in as many different ways as possible, harnessing the full spectrum of entertainment mediums. As a consumer it's clear to see how Microsoft are utilising each of the screens and the cloud from a high level, but what about the specific focus required to make a game cross each divide and present a truly persistent, shared, connected, and valuable experience for the player on every screen? How do we make sure that wherever the player is, that they can access their favourite game in some meaningful way that doesn't feel like a cheap gimmick?

First of all we focus on the TV, as it's the one we know the best, all you have to do to consider this one ticked off your list is to make a high quality game that is playable solo as well as multiplayer over Xbox Live. Obviously this game must be adored by the critics and public causing it sell gazillions. Easy. So, now that's done, what do we do with the rest?

The best connection to the PC is to port your Xbox 360 game across and have it connect to the Xbox 360 game via the Xbox Live/Windows Live integration. This will allow your players to be connected and have a Live shared gameplay experience. This is a great

Above: Microsoft's vision of persistant worlds across mobile, PC, TV and the cloud presents substantial challenges for triple-A

> ***How do we make sure that wherever the player is they can access their favourite game in some meaningful way that doesn't feel like a cheap gimmick?***

connection between the screens, but the dedication to the PC shouldn't end there, we still have the social networking phenomena that is Facebook to utilise.

Facebook gives a developer a few options; they can create completely standalone games that only connect to the 360 game by unlocking content between both games, which is a method Microsoft used with their *Chuck's Ducks* game that unlocked content in *Crackdown 2* when a global game objective had been completed. Or they can create a game that is seamlessly integrated into the 360 game's universe, which is my preferred option and admittedly far more difficult yet undoubtedly a more compelling proposition for the player. As well as games you also have the ability to create a dedicated Facebook page. Simple, yet incredibly powerful if used properly as it allows you to keep the players interested for a longer period than they normally would be in a game.

GETTING SMART

While the smart phone is listed as a different screen I find it difficult to separate it from the PC due to the fact that most smart phones have the power and internet connectivity to do everything the PC can do short of porting the full 360 game.

The one advantage that the phone has is that it comes with you everywhere you go – which means that the possibility of having a fully integrated smart phone game that will somehow ease your progress in the 360 game would likely be played at every opportunity, making it a truly valuable addition to the three screens.

The cloud isn't getting that much attention right now, but it is likely the area with the most potential of all as it allows the developer to keep the data from all these different games and apps in perfect sync and stored online making it theoretically possible to seamlessly move from one game or app to another on a different screen and continue from where you left off.

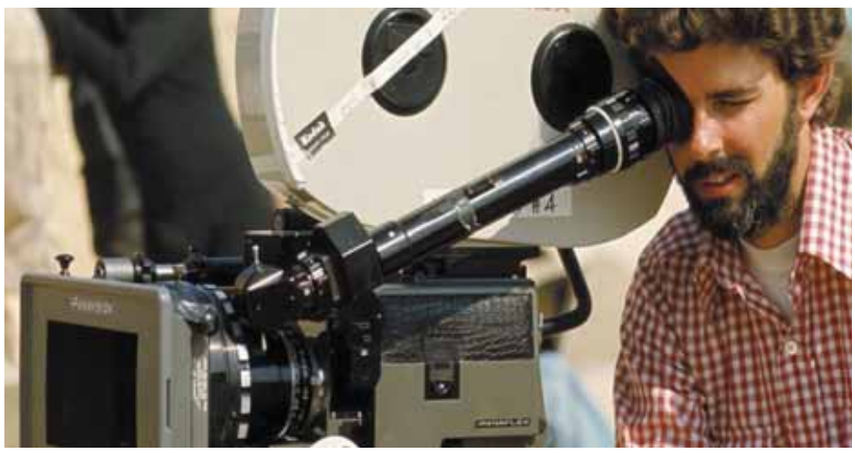
I don't know of any game that is delivering on all three screens and the cloud in this way yet, but I would guess there are quite a few being quietly developed around the world right now.

Billy Thomson is the creative director of developer Ruffian Games. Billy has over 13 years experience of designing video games, including design roles on *Grand Theft Auto* and *GTA2*, before working as lead designer on Realtime Worlds' celebrated *Crackdown*.
www.ruffiangames.com

COMMENT: OPINION

Guns for Hire vs Companies?

by David Braben, Frontier Developments



Right: The Hollywood model is attractive, but will it really work as a template for game development?

As many know, I like to draw parallels with the film business, but here is an example that I think doesn't work too well in our industry.

In film, often a 'production company' (usually just one or two people) finds individuals from each discipline as they are needed – cinematographer, script writer, director, actors, etcetera – and then they all work together to produce a single film only.

Some have suggested using this 'guns for hire' model in the games development business – but generally it is said wistfully as people count the cost of any downtime between funded projects; one of the real challenges in development.

Some 'indie' start-ups begin this way, with no formal structure, just a bunch of like-minded people working together, as did I, long ago. Without going all misty eyed about it, in the '80s it worked well, but that is because the projects were small.

We have seen this again with mobile games, and the ascendant platforms like iPhone and Android now, but that doesn't mean they will stay that way. As with much of the history of this business, those groups are already changing, and as the size of projects increase, eventually a formal structure is needed.

It works in film as there are standard processes across most of the industry, so people in a given role are pretty interchangeable. This is because most films are stylised in specific ways; they may be set in a particular historic time period; shot with strange lighting; with post-process effects to make the film look desaturated or grainy like the tradition for some times of wartime films, but none of these things change the processes significantly.

LUCAS' ARTS

Some of the things George Lucas did when he made *Star Wars* changed the process a little; he used much larger film stock to allow overlaying of special effects without degrading the quality.

It had major knock-on effects on filming and editing – and the unions hated it – but it greatly improved the end result. More recently the move to digital editing (again championed by Lucas through Industrial Light and Magic) improved the results but changed the processes. It meant he had to build a team around him with those new skills as the people were no longer interchangeable.

> ***"With games, the premiere evangelists for 'guns for hire' are the beneficiaries – companies offering middleware or content libraries."***

More importantly, look at Pixar (founded by George Lucas too– you can see why I'm a fan of his); the move to purely CGI content has turned the process upside down, and revolutionised Disney too. Even before this, producing a cartoon (or claymation – I'm an Aardman fan) is very different to that of a film. These need large teams to stay together as their skills are mutually interdependent and not interchangeable with other groups because of the different processes.

SONS OF GUNS

With games, the premiere evangelists for 'guns for hire' are the beneficiaries - companies offering middleware or central content libraries. Some games are starting to be made this way, but they look and sound the same.

Eventually that 'look' will approximate the real world, which for many types of games is fine – but as with film, those that don't look or feel the same will really stand out. They tend to be the blockbusters.

The trouble is, innovation is still happening, and this model makes innovation much harder. As with the film business, the transition will never happen altogether; there will still be some die-hard groups innovating on processes, but we are not the film business - we need to remember that. Our processes are way more involved – closer to those of CGI, which doesn't use the 'guns for hire' model yet in film.

For these 'standard' films, the main cost is the big-name actors, who are typically paid once the film is released. Other costs – camera rental and so on – are low, especially if the film is made in an existing location. This is why the model works.

In games the costs of middleware, content libraries, actors, staff are still too high for this model to work, without the costs being deferred to after the game ships. This will change, and as with film, it will be the names of the 'talent' that can help carry such a project.

Until that happens, the 'production company' model will not be for mainstream games, in my opinion.

David Braben is the founder of Cambridge-based Frontier Developments. Best known as the co-creator of *Elite*, Braben has contributed to, designed or overseen a number of other projects including *Frontier: Elite II*, *Dog's Life*, *Thrillville* and *LostWinds*. Frontier is currently developing his next title, *The Outsider*. He is also closely involved with Skillset.
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*Sources: Arab Media Outlook 2010. Media on the Move 2009. A.T. Kearney. Introduction to Gaming. Michael Moore. Screen Digest. IDC.

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COMMENT: TECHNOLOGY

On Being Partial

by Ben Board, Microsoft

Above: Microsoft's devotion to Fable pre-launch was integral to the company's subsequent acceptance in the games industry

I'm not cool. I have a BA in Computer Science, carry a Swiss Army knife and can tell you the difference between an F-16A and and F-16C, and I say things like 'I'm incredibly proud to work for Microsoft'.

This column will be my last for now, unless Outlook quickly learns how to interpret and reply to the questions of Xbox game developers on my behalf, so with a touch of stirring music and a small green flag placed in front of my desk fan I'd like to use it to talk about why that is.

I had the privilege of working at Lionhead in the early Noughties as a lead on the first *Fable*. I wasn't privy to all the publishing conversations that went on, but for the purposes of tight narrative, one day Microsoft walked in and decided that *Fable* was going to be one of the world's biggest gaming franchises. The potential of the game and team was already jaw-droppingly obvious, but even back then blockbuster status required much more than that, and a committed publisher was essential. And I'd never seen such commitment. Suddenly hordes of people of a supernatural calibre were working alongside the team to finish and polish the game – experienced and diplomatic producers, tireless programmers and scripters, armies of QA, high-tech user experience teams; the hardest-working and most patient and cheerful and single-minded bunch imaginable. The Lionhead team boasted (and still boasts) probably the highest concentration of talent of any team I've seen, and the combination was awe-inspiring, and we all worked very, very hard, and the game we made was not just successful but important.

And Xbox had a convert. I saw at first hand just how much Microsoft, this gaming upstart, cared about making great games, and I made a note in my margin that should the opportunity ever arise to be part of that drive to make the best games better then I should jump at it; and five years later, it did. If anything I feel it all the more now, being part of that process on the other end, and seeing that a comparable degree of support is bringing benefits to many titles day in, day out. Not very English, I suppose, to express pride in working for a corporation, especially a ginormous American one, but for Microsoft's services to gaming I say without hesitation: proud I am.

So if it's services to gaming I value, how do I feel about The Other Guys, our console competition?

> ***While we're in competition with Nintendo and Sony - and be in no doubt that we want to be top dog - we have more in common than we like to think.***

THE OTHER SIDE

This is where it gets odd. Games have an intrinsic, platform-agnostic value, but my job is ultimately to get people to buy Xbox consoles and games and not PlayStations or Wiis. My gamer-half says that any new platform has value if it provides new experiences; my Xbox-half wants you to ignore the others and buy Kinect and a new 360 S. Partisan column or not, I won't dwell – much – on the thesis that titles with both 360 and PS3 SKUs often perform better on our box, or how much slicker I reckon our online experience is, or so on, because it leads to nothing but tiresome fanboy forum flamewars.

Thing is, while we're in healthy and at times fierce competition with Nintendo and, more directly (for now), Sony – and be in no doubt that we want to be top dog – we have more in common than we like to think. My Mum couldn't tell you the difference between them, for a start.

A few columns back I talked about the significance of rival ecosystems. While we may each defend our own branch we're really up the same tree. Most games released on one platform also appear on the other; CTOs spend years abstracting away the differences to their code teams; our respective platform logos form an orderly queue at the bottom of the bus shelter or magazine ad; and my own role is performed in SCEE by some top-drawer guys and gals, in a functionally identical way. Tribalism aside I have nothing but respect for them. We use the same publishers, retailers and marketing channels, and we're all appealing to the same line in people's entertainment budgets, and when recessions hit, they hit us equally.

Meanwhile it's no great insight that we format holders are having to compete for gamers' attention on more fronts than ever before. Apple, to its credit, has brought phone gaming from fragmented non-viability to mainstream acceptance, and our own Windows Phone 7 intends to take that even further. Facebook's success with games wasn't even predicted by Facebook. My five-year-old son is, this week, in love with golf, and woe betide you for trying to lever him off the DS or one of the thousand browser games he's found. One can argue about the relative merits of those games versus console games, but in that fight the two HD consoles occupy the same corner.

We're all incredibly fortunate to be involved in such a dynamic, evolving and entertaining business. There are times I care about Xbox games over others, but most of the time, I just care about games.

Now go and buy Kinect - it's so much better than that other thing. It's been lots of fun contributing to *Develop*. Thanks to Michael, Will, Stuart and Rob for the opportunity, and the first person to mail me proving they read all my columns gets a copy of *Halo Reach*.

Ben Board is European developer account manager at Microsoft, supporting all studios working on games for Xbox and Games For Windows platforms. He previously worked as a programmer and producer at the likes of Bullfrog, EA and Lionhead.

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10 years of Game Connection

This month the Game Connection networking event series celebrates its tenth anniversary. **Will Freeman** talks to managing director Pierre Carde about the history of the industry's leading business meeting gathering…

WHAT WAS the original vision when Game Connection was founded 10 years ago?
The vision behind Game Connection was both practical and engaged.

The core idea was to make the process for a developer to sell and finance a game project simple and easy.

Ten years ago the games industry's creative teams didn't have an event to bring playable demos to and pitch their know-how to potential publishers; especially console and tech developers. Game Connection's architecture and values were also designed by game developers themselves for game developers.

Back in 2000 our local industry was at its pinnacle.

I was myself a game producer before owning Game Connection and I can you tell how hectic the spirit was between colossal publishers like Infogrammes/Atari, EA and a bunch of highly talented indie or in-house studios such as Eden Games, Arkane studio, Etranges Libellules, Phoenix Interactive, Widescreen Games and others.

All that positive energy was gathered to answer all developers' needs.

How has Game Connection expanded its remit since the first show?
There are more events. Since 2001, the event also changed from a France-centric event at first to two international events gathering the whole industry with up to 20 nationalities. The event has evolved from a developers and publishers-only to all players from the production pipeline – including the services providers and outsourcing companies.

> ***Our DNA is still very much non-profit. We want to help the industry grow and develop as much as we did 10 years ago.***
>
> Pierre Carde, Game Connection

We also now give the opportunity to our attendees to meet investors and that's something the games industry really gets with the Game Connection Invest initiative. Today, it would be crazy to think that you can grow a business as a developer without having an excellent business model in place.

We are also really eager to keep offering what the current market needs by bringing together the good players and to add exciting new initiatives like Game Connection Selected Projects and Game Connection Invest, rather than offering only the same, limited event each and every year.

How have events in new territories and countries bolstered what Game Connection offers?
The global landscape was different 10 years ago. That's a fact and the real catch for any trade show is always to revamp, rethink, and reinvent itself to bring the best quality of service and return on investment to participants. Over the last 10 years, only a few happy events have grown outside their own frontiers to achieve a real international recognition.

Game Connection is among the top-five events with E3, GDC, TGS and Gamescom in terms of business results, and is the fourth oldest after GDC, TGS and E3.

I've seen a couple of other events trying to mimic Game Connection, and we're flattered. But, we've been doing this successfully for a long time and we have long standing relationships with key industry players, so we expect to ▶

Above: Game Connection's managing director Pierre Carde

GAME CONNECTION

▶ continue in our leadership position with ongoing and permanent improvements.

What has the impact of Game Connection actually been on the industry?
The impact was immediate in 2001 and Game Connection's effect on the industry has continued to grow throughout the past decade.

The number of developers demoing new titles, the number of interested publishers, and the number of attendees has expanded consistently every year. Even during the difficult global economic challenges of 2008 and 2009 the attendee numbers rose significantly.

We think that these growing numbers provide evidence that the industry believes Game Connection to be worth its time, In turn that tells us there are professionals making deals which both sides of the industry– developers and publishers – think are especially good for their businesses.

How has Game Connection changed over the years to reflect the changing industry?
Nothing and everything. We kept the format and the skeleton the same and the rest of the event is renewed almost completely. The philosophy behind Game Connection remains unchanged. It was created by a non-profit association and, even though the team behind it bought it to run it as a private project, our DNA is still very much non-profit. We want to help the industry grow and develop as much as we did ten years ago.

The industry has changed significantly, probably more than a lot of other industries. Luckily enough, most people are great individuals in the game industry, and that makes every Game Connection a very fun and worthwhile event.

The networking gathering has shifted from a console market to a global production and finance market, that is probably the main change.
www.game-connection.com

Game Connection – The main event

LIKE ITS predecessors Game Connection's tenth anniversary show is designed to bring together those from development, publishing, finance, outsourcing and a wealth of other disciplines for focused business meetings.

The event's unique Meeting Application tool has been conceived to make it easy to secure face-to-face time with dozens of prospective business partners.

Glance over the list of over 1,400 companies large and small available to spend face-to-face time with, and it's clear Game Connection offers a significant boon to attendees' prospects.

This year's show takes place in Lyon, France, and runs from Tuesday, November 16th until Thursday, November 18th.
For information on attending visit www.game-connection.com

THE MONTH AHEAD

A look at what November has in store for the industry and beyond…

NOVEMBER 1ST:
All Saints' Day, or, the day after Halloween. That pale developer skin becomes uncool again.

NOVEMBER 4TH:
The **London Games Conference** looks at survival and profit in an ever-changing industry. It's going to be pretty damn insightful.

lgc
london games conference 2010

NOVEMBER 5TH:
Bonfire Night. On this night in 1605, Guy Fawkes failed to blow up the Houses of Parliament, which means you need to eat a jacket potato cooked in a fire.

NOVEMBER 6TH TO 7TH:
Tired of the generic nature of modern games? **R3play** in Blackpool brings together hundreds of playable retro classics on arcade cabs, classic consoles, vintage computers, and even pinball machines.

NOVEMBER 8TH TO9TH:
In snowy Québec, the seventh **Montreal International Game Summit** will be bringing developers in from the cold for two days of top-flight industry speakers.

MONTRÉAL INTERNATIONAL GAME SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 10TH:
The ongoing motion control war will heat up once again as Microsoft launches its **Kinect** peripheral and almost 20 launch titles.

NOVEMBER 10TH – 12TH:
The **Unite 2010 Conference** takes place in Old Montreal, Canada. See page 26 for our interesting, informative and entertaining copy.

NOVEMBER 16TH:
Ezio Auditore da Firenze returns as a middle-aged knife-for-hire trying to keep up with the kids in Ubisoft Montreal's **Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood.**

NOVEMBER 18TH:
Get your thinking faces and 'deep' ideas ready for the UNESCO **International Philosophy Day.**

NOVEMBER 18TH:
The **ME Awards 2010** will be awarding and rewarding the standout developers and businesses working in the mobile sector today.

ME AWARDS 2010

NOVEMBER 25TH TO 29TH:
The **1st Ashes Test** takes place at The Gabba stadium in Brisbane, Australia. Young gamers in England and Australia fight their dads for control of the TV.

NOVEMBER 30TH:
Warren Spector's conservatively titled new magnum opus, **Epic Mickey**, is released on the Wii.

Connecting people

Some of the industry's leading developers and publishers reveal what Game Connection means to them, and offer some advice…

PETE SMITH
Executive producer, SCEE
"When it comes to discovering new talent Game Connection Europe has been one of the high points in the calendar for the past ten years. In allowing easy access and opportunity to catch up with established studios while being introduced to up-and-coming developers it is one of the key annual events for the ongoing health, growth and innovation within the games industry."

CASPER GREY
Acquisitions manager, Square Enix London Studios
"There are always pitches that surprise and intrigue me – you never know what the next meeting will bring. It's an event that constantly reminds you of the passion and dedication to the craft that is so prevalent in our industry. We're all in this to make games that are great entertainment, that reach the biggest possible audience and that deliver commercial success for everyone involved. Over the last decade, developer/publisher relationships have grown into collaborative partnerships and, to me, this is a positive sign of a maturing industry."

RAPHAEL COLANTONIO
President and co-creative director, Arkane Studios/Bethesda
"We signed two publishing deals following up meetings with publishers we probably wouldn't have even thought of if it weren't for Game Connection. When we were independent, there was simply no better way to meet all publishers in such a fast and cost effective way. Now that we're part of Bethesda, we still attend the event from the buyer's side"

MARTYN BROWN
Co-founder, Team17
"For developers I'd advise that they try and present themselves and their projects very clearly, keeping the pitch short and succinct. With each meeting only lasting 30 minutes, you need to have plenty of time for discussion. I think it's also helpful to understand that developer's first meetings with publishers should be considered very valuable introductions and first impressions are very important, so make yourself and your projects memorable – the real work will come in follow-up talks, meetings and such."

DEVELOP DIARY

Your complete games development event calendar for the months ahead…

EVOLVE IN LONDON
December 8th
London, England
www.evolveconference.com

Evolve in London is a day-long conference focusing on how to develop games for new platforms, new technologies and new markets.

The event's programme will explore emerging platforms, new business models and the integration of internet services and user-generated content. It has been conceived to help game developers tackle the issues arising from emerging platforms and digital marketplaces, connected gaming, user-generated content, and the crossover between games and Internet services.

Key speakers include ngmoco's CEO Neil Young and Playfish boss Kristian Segerstrale.

NOVEMBER 2010

LONDON GAMES CONFERENCE
November 4th
London, England
www.develop-online.net

MONTREAL INT. GAMES SUMMIT
November 8th to 14th
Montreal, Canada
sijm.ca/2010

NEON 10
November 8th to 14th
Dundee, Scotland
www.northeastofnorth.com

UNITE 2010 CONFERENCE
November 10th to 12th
Old Montreal, Canada
unity3d.com/unite

SOCIAL GAMING SUMMIT
November 11th
London, England
www.mediabistro.com/events

SOCIAL GAMING SUMMIT
November 12th
London, England
www.mediabistro.com/events

GAME CONNECTION
November 16th to 18th
Lyon, France
www.game-connection.com

ME AWARDS 2010
November 18th
London, England
www.mobile-ent.biz

DEVELOP IN LIVERPOOL
November 25th
Liverpool, England
liverpool.develop-conference.com

MCV PUB QUIZ
December 2nd
London, England
www.mcvuk.com

DECEMBER 2010

ITALIAN VIDEOGAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
December 3rd
Rome, Italy
www.ivdconf.com

GDC CHINA
December 5th to 7th
Shanghai, China
www.gdcchina.com

EVOLVE IN LONDON
December 8th
London, England
www.evolveconference.com

FEBRUARY 2011

D.I.C.E
February 9th to 11th
Las Vegas, US
www.dicesummit.org

CASUAL CONNECT
February 8th to 10th
Hamburg, Germany
europe.casualconnect.org

GDC
February 28th to March 4th
San Francisco, US
www.gdconf.com

SHAPING THE FUTURE AT **UNITE** 2010

Develop meets Unity's chief creative officer Nicholas Francis to ask why the industry should head to Montréal this month

Far left: Unity founders Nicholas Francis, David Helgason and Joachim Ante

Meeting our users is always the most exciting thing for us as it is how we get to find out about how they use Unity," says Unity's chief creative officer Nicholas Francis.

"It's also a great time for us to find out what they want and for them to engage with us and help shape the future of Unity."

He is talking about Unite 2010, the latest of Unity's annual conferences for its Unity engine users, and those who are interested in the engine. This year the three-day event will be taking place at the Marché Bonsecours in Montréal, Canada. Francis seems excited about the potential of this year's location.

"As Unity is a global phenomenon, Montréal has the advantage of being convenient for both our European and North American developers," he says.

"And it was actually the location that was most voted for by our developers."

This year's conference, as well as featuring several hands-on tutorials with the Unity engine every day, will offer sessions on Unity for both console and mobile games development, serialisation and advanced editor scripting and how to make money with Unity.

There will be talks and panel sessions from Unity staff and users, and the event will end with the annual Unity Awards show, recognising some of the most exciting uses of Unity over the past year.

"Attendees will learn how to make more effective use of Unity to make better games and applications. We've got some deeply technical sessions being given by our staff as well as sessions from other developers," Francis states.

"Our engineers will also be giving hands-on sessions for developers to come and talk about their projects and get advice on aspects of Unity that interest them. This year we've also introduced a speed-dating session for developers to meet publishers."

> ***"As Unity is a global phenomenon, Montréal has the advantage of being convenient for both European and North American studios."***
>
> Nicholas Francis, Unity CCO

As ever, there seem to be some surprises in store for Unity attendees this year as well.

"At Unite we always treat users to new announcements, and this year will be no exception," says Francis.

Now in its fourth year, the Unite conference is going from strength to strength. The event has granted Unity a whole new level of international exposure as a company and, according to Francis, opened up interactions with its customers around the globe that have changed the firm for the better.

"Unity has such a broad user base today that having our own event allows us to really go in-depth on a variety of technical aspects," he says.

"It also allows our users to meet and interact with each other – sharing knowledge and experience is a great thing and our community continues to be really important to us."

unity3d.com/unite

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

As the keynote speaker to the event this time around, Schell Games CEO Jesse Schell is looking ahead to kicking off proceedings in Montréal on the 10th of this month.

"I will discuss the past, present and future of animated 3D characters, in and outside of games, because I believe that will be central to the success of Unity 3D."

THE PICK OF THE SESSIONS

A host of sessions, panels and Unity hands-ons gatherings fill the agenda for the three-day Unite 2010 conference. We have picked out the best of the upcoming sessions and panels:

SESSION: Making Money with Unity

Tony Garcia, VP of business development, Unity Technologies

Under a brilliantly simple session title that says it all, Garcia's will break down the most important thing Unity users need to know. According to Unity it will offer advice for those looking to address Unity's financial demands, covering topics like marketing and filling out RFP's. Real-world examples will be used to illustrate Garcia's arguments.

PANEL: State of Social

Jason Della Rocca (Perimeter Partners), Matt Meeks (Bender/Helper Impact), Andrew Gracie (Overinteractive Media), Ludovic Bodin (CMUNE)

This panel will attempt to explore the state of games and social networks in the face of rapidly altering monetisation models, marketing and viral tactics to distribution strategies. Case studies will be presented during the discussion, with a Q&A to follow.

SESSION: Unity 3.0's Graphics Pipeline

Shawn White, Unity Technologies
Daniel Brauer, Silverback Productions

In this session, attendees will be introduced to the deferred lighting system and new custom shaders workflow in Unity 3.0, as well as the new graphics pipeline featured in the latest engine update. The hosts will explain how to create custom surface shaders that utilise forward and deferred lighting.

SESSIONS: The Joys of Serialisation

Amir Ebrahimi, Unity Technologies

Serialisation is an important topic to all games developers. In this session Amir Ebrahimi will outline the ins and outs of the serialisation options available to the developers and tools, engine and gameplay programmers making use of the Unity Engine. Learn to store the likes of data for GUI layouts, model and texture formats and AI state data with ease.

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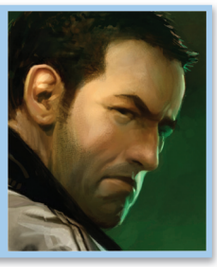
DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

"The Canadian Government believes in supporting a digital economy, not propping up a manufacturing one."

Trevor Fencott, Bedlam Games, p52

Bigpoint's browser game revolution

p35



An offbeat insiders' guide to Liverpool

p39

Why everyone is heading to Canada

p42

Gold Mine

Minecraft is a phenomenon. Develop meets creator Markus Persson to find out how a game made money before it was finished, p30

Markus Persson's success will be an inspiration to many aspiring microstudios

PERSSON UNKNOWN

In just a few months, a still-in-beta user-generated content game has pushed Swedish indie developer Markus Persson into the industry spotlight. And the game, *Minecraft*, has pushed his bank balance skywards. But who is he? And why do so many developers love his creation? **Will Freeman** finds out…

The snowballing success of indie triumph *Minecraft* has been near impossible to miss. The world-building game, created by the relatively unknown Swede Markus Persson, made the headlines when last month it started to clock sales of €300,000 a day.

Initially conceived early in 2009, *Minecraft* is still only in beta, but has already enchanted game development's most fashionable opinion formers, and given new hope to the small studios playing the self-publishing lottery.

Keen to find out more about how *Minecraft* has become the year's indie sensation, *Develop* tracked down Persson for a rare interview, and asked him how he did it.

What has caused the recent burst of enthusiasm for Minecraft? Was there something you deliberately tapped?
Something about the game makes it entertaining to both show to other people and to watch other people play it. I think this is what caused the word of mouth to spread so fast. Then lately a number of large internet sites and magazines started talking about *Minecraft*, and that's certainly helped. I haven't intentionally tried to tap into this, but I have spent a lot of time trying to make the game as accessible as possible.

So how much is luck part of the equation when being successful with a self-published game?
I think originality and easy access is much more important than luck. If you make a game that's genuinely good, and it's relatively unique, you can get a lot potential customers. If you make sure they don't have to jump through too many loops to play or even pay for the game, you can convert those into actual customers. To get as popular as *Minecraft* has become, I think you might need a bit of luck, but I don't think it's at all impossible to reach a decently large audience just by hard work.

Do you think you could take what you've learned and repeat that success?
I used to think I would be able to repeat it, but then it started spreading even faster. I doubt I will be able to reproduce the current level of hype, but I will certainly try. One thing that's in our favour is that we have a lot of followers already in *Minecraft*, so we can get the word out about new games much faster than before.

Minecraft seems to have particularly captured the attention of games developers. Why do you think that is?
Minecraft started out on the tigsource forums, where a lot of indie gamers hang out, and it's always been developed as an indie game. There are other commercially successful indie games out there, but relatively few of them are open about exactly how much they sell.

I think *Minecraft* is a combination of a somewhat original game, and an indication that indie games are really an alternative to more traditional development styles. That has probably got a lot of different people's attention across the world.

Can you tell us a little about your previous career in the games industry?
Many years ago, I developed a game called *Wurm Online* with Rolf Jansson. That game is still running, and he's been doing that as his day job for many years now. After that, I worked for King.com where I made a whole pile of small Flash games, each having usually one-to-two months development time. I briefly joined Avalanche Studios during this time, but went back to King.com almost immediately. Working in big machinery is not for me.

How important was the tool and tech choices you made to defining Minecraft's success?
I chose Java because it's really fast to develop in, even if it's a bit verbose at times, and because applets were starting to become much less annoying than they had used to. Without something like Lightweight Java Game Library, it wouldn't have been possible to make a game like *Minecraft* at all in Java. I probably could've made the game in C++, but then I wouldn't have had the browser-friendly applet, which I think is a large part of the success.

I'm a bit worried now that Oracle owns Java, though. They haven't shown any interest at all in client-side Java.

> ***"Minecraft is a combination of a somewhat original game, and an indication that indie games are an alternative to more traditional development styles."***
>
> Markus Persson

Why make so much of your game available to buy before it was finished?
I wanted to work on games for a living, and I realised that the biggest obstacle to that is that people would have to actually pay for the game. So I decided to just get that out of the way as early as possible. And why not? If it's fun, people might be willing to pay for it. I think it's a really interesting model for studios with small budgets, and it also lets you have a much more personal relationship with the players instead of just developing the game behind closed doors for two years, then hoping it's good.

What are the challenges in keeping people interested in the coming months? How do keep up the momentum and avoid becoming a fad?
Once we get the company up and running, we can hopefully ramp up development speed a bit, and get the multiplayer mode fully functioning.

Once that's in place, I think there's a huge potential in competitive multiplayer modes like capture the flag and so on, which should keep people – including myself – interested for a long time. ▶

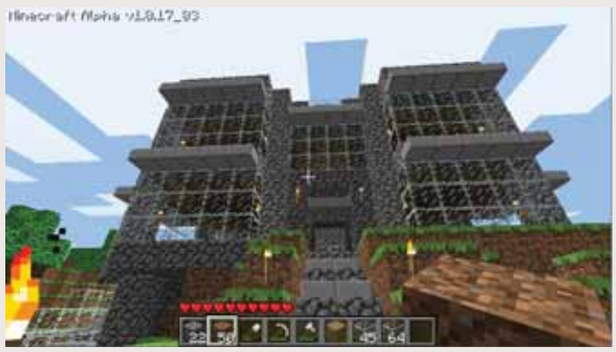
So what is Minecraft?

While the logic of *Minecraft's* dazzling success has left many observers somewhat bewildered, its simple freeform mechanic is a little easier for spectators of the phenomenon to grasp. So what is *Minecraft*?

"The easiest way to describe it is usually just to describe the gameplay," suggests the title's creator Markus Persson. "Basically, it's a huge world made up of one-meter blocks of different materials, like wood or dirt or stone or water. You can pick up these blocks and use them to craft items or build houses with. Then there are monsters to fight, treasures to find, and mine carts to ride."

Minecraft's world is one where generating content is to all intents and purposes the end experience. It is a virtual construction kit steeped in the jagged aesthetics of the 16 and 32-bit eras, and thrives in letting users build and destroy landscapes that make furiously enthusiastic nods to the kingdoms made famous by Miyamoto and his contemporaries.

But Persson's creation is more than a paint set of sky blues and grass greens where fan-boys can sketch three-dimensional love letters to Nintendo. It is a flexible pallet that lets users escape stylistic confines, and as an eager army of beta testers are already proving, it's capacity for the original and surreal is immense.



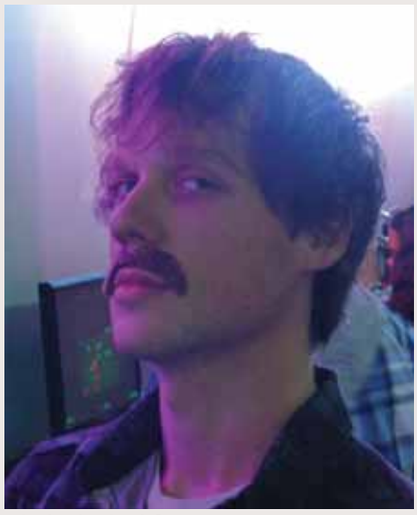
Why I Minecraft

Part of *Minecraft's* staggering success is down to the fact that the dev sector's hip hegemony have not only embraced the game, but felt compelled to spread the word through the likes of Twitter. But just why do the industry's brightest admire the game so, and why do they think it's a hit?

Gary Penn
Denki:

"I love *Minecraft*. It's like LEGO meets *Lost*. It's such an empowering construction toy set – a simple and powerful system – blended with the need to survive in an unknown microcosm. There's a lot to learn and manipulate – and in your own time and way. It works on so many levels that combine to tickle your most base instincts – and it's not even finished.

"I'm also impressed and envious of the way the author's working. It's a lovely 'naked development' approach that I never did get around to doing myself."



Quintin Smith
Rock, Paper, Shotgun:

"*MineCraft* is LEGO, basically. It provides you with a world that's been simplified to such an extent that you can build or sculpt anything you can imagine with perfect precision, and that's hugely satisfying. Except unlike LEGO, you then get to live in this world."

Alice Taylor
commissioning editor
Channel 4 Education:

"Why it's so successful? Who knows; a mixture of timing, magic and zeitgeist? Maybe we're bored of 8-bit retro and now it's all about *Doom/Quake* retro. Maybe it's the limitless possibilities of house building: from Falling Water repros, to castles, to the Starship Enterprise at 1:1 scale. Maybe it's the gold-panning: regular, but unpredictable and valuable 'finds' tickles our dopamine receptors. None of this on paper would have predicted the enormous, almost ridiculous response to *Minecraft*, though."

▶ For the single player game and co-op game, I plan on adding some kind of overarching narrative to the game to drive the player forward and provide a sense of direction, and add many more new features, like monster towns and alchemy.

Is there any satisfaction in knowing that every Euro spent on your game is a Euro taken from the giant publishers?

I don't think it's a zero sum game. Heck, my biggest expense is computer games, so some of the money goes to them anyway, via *Minecraft*. There is room for all types of games, and I personally love a lot of big budget super games. Some of them, like *BioShock* (not the sequel) and *Dragon Age*, actually have soul. Others are just mindless fun for an afternoon.

But I find it very comforting that people are willing to pay for games even if they're not made by huge publishers. Even if they don't sell as well, it means that small teams of indie game developers could actually make a reasonable living.

Do you intend to stay in the self-published space, or are you looking to use Minecraft as a launch pad for a career with a bigger studio?

I'm investing in starting up a new studio, actually. We're hiring people and getting an office, and all that. Initially, I will keep working on *Minecraft* and get some help on it, while a friend of mine will lead development of another, unrelated game that we've talked about doing for some time now. Everyone in the company will be involved in both project to some degree, and once they're both complete the plan is to move on to a third game as a team.

www.minecraft.net

Minecraft's army of users have a knack for creating landscapes both surreal and esoteric

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A case in **Bigpoint**

In under a decade German outfit Bigpoint has emerged to dominate the browser gaming space. **Will Freeman** talks to CEO Heiko Hubertz about how the company did it…

Back in 2002 Heiko Hubertz had foresight that would do much to set the template for the now vast browser gaming sector.

It was then that he founded website m.wire, which gradually began to introduce sports management titles to a new wave of internet-savvy consumers. In turn a series of investments and reorganisations eventually gave birth to the Bigpoint.com portal, which in 2006 brought together just 16 titles.

After that inception, which was in equal parts humble and visionary, Bigpoint's fortunes snowballed, and now, as CEO, Hubertz overseas one of the most significant empires in the contemporary gaming industry.

The firm's network of over 60 games today reaches more than 140 million customers worldwide, and have been translated into 25 languages. The likes of *Dark Orbit* and *Seafight* might not be the most potent brands when contrasted with the giants of triple-A, but the future that terrifies many of the games industry's traditionalists is a place filled with opportunities for Bigpoint's leading titles.

Above: Bigpoint founder Heiko Hubertz beleives a robust technology platform is vital to the company's success

FORWARD THINKING

"We believe in pushing the boundaries of what's possible in online gaming," says Hubertz of Bigpoint's future-ready position. "We are building high-quality 3D games that provide a gaming experience similar to what gamers are used to getting through consoles.

> ***"Upcoming titles, such as Battlestar Galactica Online and Poisonville will change the perception of what's possible through a browser."***
>
> *Heiko Hubertz, Bigpoint*

"Upcoming titles, such as *Battlestar Galactica Online, Poisonville*, and *The Mummy* will change the perception of what's possible through a browser. Our distribution network is far broader than most in terms of channel and regions. Our payment platform has taken years to develop and allows users from around the world to use their preferred payment method regardless of country or region. We're monetising in over 180 countries around the world."

Confident words indeed, but for Hubertz there is reason for his conviction. Behind the cash flow and customer base on which Bigpoint thrives is a business and technology platform that many of the company's counterparts have been eager to emulate.

"For us, technology is vital," confirms Hubertz. "We build atop platforms that are able to deliver the best gamer experience. We understand that innovation is vital to success. Over the years, we have developed titles with Flash, Java, and now Unity.

"On the business side, we have a global network that includes over 1,000 partners, including our own portal that we drive traffic to very aggressively. We have integrated with every major payment solution you can imagine. The combination of high quality games, a massive network, and the right monetisation solutions are what keeps Bigpoint ahead of the competition."

FACE-TO-FACEBOOK

Bigpoint has overcome many obstacles that have caused lesser operations great problems. It has resisted the pressure to piggyback on a social networking giant, maintaing its independence whilst making games with a global appeal. Its strength in that regard, says the CEO, is down to quality of staff.

"Game portals are gaining momentum fast," concludes Hubertz, turning his attention – as ever – to the future. "They're also gaining credibility among core and hardcore gamers as windows into real games. Many of the games we have under development are designed to appeal to the most critical gamers, and run in a browser. We don't think high quality games should require expensive hardware to enjoy. Our mission is to unlock barriers to high quality gameplay, no matter where the player is. We are excited about what the near future looks like."

www.bigpoint.net

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Amiqus Games is a leading provider of specialist talent to the video games industry. The company recruits for some of the world's premier studios for artists, animators, producers, programmers, designers and executives such as studio heads and director level roles.

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MAKING THE CONNECTION

With over a decade in the business behind it, develop and publisher Connect2Media is currently pushing expectations in the low-cost subscription space. **Stuart Richardson** talks to COO Greg Robinson about the new Game A Day drive...

Above: With titles like 365 Puzzle Club (above) and Edge (right), Connect2Media has made a significant impact on the evolving mobile space

Manchester-based developer and publisher Connect2Media, founded as nGame in 1998 and bought by US publisher Mforma in 2002, has been working with award-winning and immensly popular mobile IP of the likes of *Edge* and *PES 2010* since its 2008 restructuring.

It has built a reputation that is synonymous with the work that it produces, but the recent efforts that the company has made to launch subscription services for its games have also been attracting a lot of interest. It recently followed up its original Prize Play service with the new Game A Day facility that those in charge have high hopes for.

"We believe that the Game A Day service will be successful as it's target audience is the larger number of people whose appetite for content is much larger than their budgets," says the firm's COO Greg Robinson.

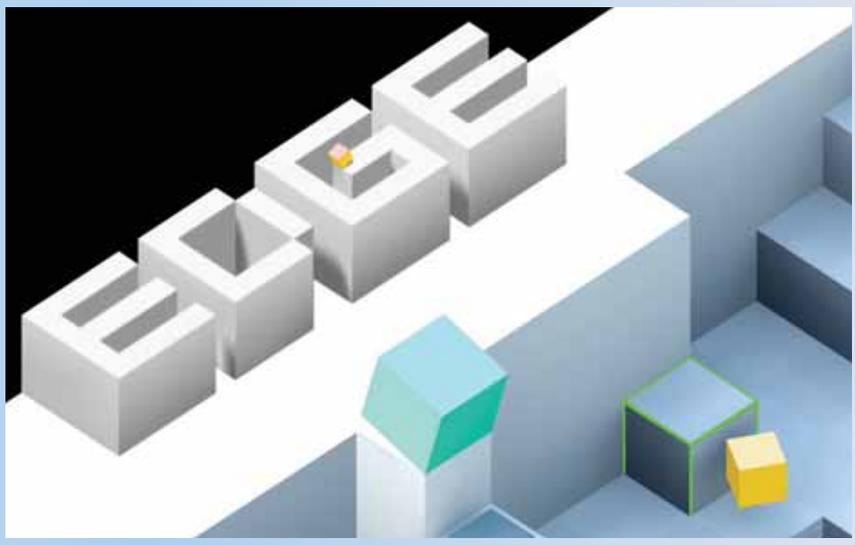
"Our aim is to make the service available for a low subscription fee, delivering fun and social content to their phones. The Flash Lite technology can overcome the limitations of device power and fragmentation between all markets and allows for a rapid, low cost development process."

DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF FASHION

Getting to the position whereby the company can attempt to shape the industry in which it operates has been no simple matter. Robinson explains the way in which Connect2Media has redefined itself to suit its business targets in relation to market validity: "We have moved a very long way since we set out, becoming leaner and more critical of the business oppourtunities that we pursue.

"We have achieved a lot since 2008. We've restored most of our direct carrier relations, joined several industry groups and added the North American carriers to our distribution.

"A lot remains though. We are hard at work on our biggest challenge in the migration from traditional BREW and J2ME markets to future platforms and distribution models. The Prize Play and Game A Day services we are developing are all complimentary to our core focus to remain in the carrier mobile space."



Prize Play, the founding subscription-based gaming service from the company, still holds pride of place on the rosta of what Connect2Media offers to it's numerous customers. "It is hugely important to us", Robinson agrees.

> ***"We are hard at work on our biggest challenge in the migration from traditional BREW and J2ME markets to future platforms and distribution models."***
>
> *Greg Robinson, Connect2Media*

"Prize Play is a fantastic service and a unique product for the sector. Unlike other play to win products the service links the user to many games on the service carrying their account seamlessly from one game to another.

"It has a proven track record on the US carrier decks and we believe that the category can be reinvigorated into a successful service for Connect2Media and the consumer."

BRAND NEW DAY

As for the future, Robinson has separated out the immediete and more distant years and laid out his expectations accordingly.

"It's quite hard to say where the mobile sector will end up. The short term future is a transition to large, touch screen devices and increasing flexibility in pricing," he says.

"Long term the future looks good, as even more people play mobile games. On J2ME handsets only two to three per cent of owners purchased games. The iPhone has shown that, given access, this rises dramatically."

There can be little doubt that Connect2Media will be at the fine edge of any movements of this kind. Robinson is confident of this, and is under no illusions as to where he thinks the company's ability to move with trends comes from.

"The main thing that has got us through this has been the hard work and professionalism of the whole team. We have been lucky to have had very good people in the company," he says.

Connect2Media is upbeat and determined, and if the new wave of subscription services for mobile gaming catch on, seeing its name may become increasingly commonplace.

www.connect2media.com

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- A sociable environment in which to mix with fellow developers over coffee and lunch, plus a post-event drinks party with delegates from both Develop and Software City a business event running alongside us.

KEYNOTE

Seeing is Believing : 3D a New Creative Medium for Games
Mick Hocking, Senior Director, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

At the Odeon Cinema 3D glasses provided!

Expect case studies of 3D games, highlighting the lessons learned from converting many of SCEE's leading titles to 3D. An insight into why games are the killer content for the 3D revolution. Plus, what it takes to convert your game to 3D.

Sessions include:

BUSINESS

Kinect: A Whole New Business
Philip Oliver, Blitz Games Studios

DESIGN

The Making of MotorStorm: Apocalypse – Shaking Up Action Racing
Matt Southern, Evolution Studios

PRODUCTION

Building With Magic: Fun With Licensors
Arthur Parsons, Traveller's Tales

THE DEN

Innovation in the Fast Lane: A Driving Game Designer Mash-Up
Charnjit Bansi, Bizarre Creations
and
Nick Baynes, Disney Black Rock

THE DEN

DESIGN

Putting Formula 1 Back into pole Position
Paul Jeal, Codemasters
and
Stephen Hood, Codemasters

DESIGN

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Scouse Honour

As the Develop in Liverpool conference draws close, the city's industry insiders offer a local's guide to making the most of the cultural metropolis...

With the Develop in Liverpool conference set to take place towards the end of this month, many of the industry's leading lights will be heading to the UK's northerly development hub.

In preparation for your visit, and to arm you with facts for those evening networking events, *Develop* asked some of the Merseyside area's finest for a local's guide to the former European city of culture, and some inside knowledge on the Liverpool development sector's underbelly.

TRIPLE-A IS LIVERPUDLIAN JARGON
"Not many people know but the industry term triple-A was coined by Peter Sullivan seeking a way to differentiate title sales forecasts for the first PlayStation games to be launched by Liverpool's Psygnosis. The first ever triple-A's were *WipEout* and *Destruction Derby*."
Ivan Davies, production and development director, Catalyst Outsourcing
www.catalystos.com

LIVERPOOL'S OVERLOOKED GEMS
Juice Studios in Warrington, famed for the *Juiced* racing franchise, was recently re-branded to THQ Digital UK. After a bout of redundancy this studio has now gone from strength to strength signing deals for new IP like *Red Faction: Battlegrounds*. One to watch out for on PSN and Xbox Live arcade.
Stig Strand, Amiqus

HELLO WORLD
"Rage Games, which ran from 1992 until 2003, was based in Martin's Bank Buildings which was the first bank in the world to use a computer."
Ivan Davies, Catalyst Outsourcing

WHY SET UP IN LIVERPOOL?
"Liverpool is a vibrant city, full of creative activities and inspiration all over the city – it was European city of culture in 2008. From a business perspective, it has everything you would need in a city; a good transport infrastructure, an airport, a lively and vibrant night life, great restaurants, a rich and long history and the like. A major re-development is going on all over the city. So for a game developer like Spiral House, it makes our job much easier when trying to attract creative talent when we have such a diverse culture and dynamic environment that is on the move, on our doorstep."
Kevin Oxland, MD and creative manager, Spiral House **www.spiralhouse.co.uk**

NEED INSPIRATION?
"FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, is a great place for inspiration. FACT is a Liverpool-based cinema, art gallery and the UK's leading organisation for the support and exhibition of film, art and new media including video games."
Kevin Oxland, Spiral House

Antony Gromley's 'Another Place' installation on Crosby Beach, near Liverpool

THINKING OF MOVING?
"Up and coming developers can speak to the Mersey Partnership and receive funding via the grant for business investment scheme. This can cover up to 30 per cent of staffing costs for small developers for the first three years of a studios growth. This can substantially lower costs when looking to set up."
Stig Strand, head of games recruitment team, Amiqus **www.amiqus.com**

INDUSTRY HANG OUTS
"The Albert Dock restaurants offer a picturesque setting for business meetings and the city centre is always a good night out with bars like Alma de Cuba and the living room often proving regular haunts for trendy developers."
Stig Strand, Amiqus

BACK IN THE DAY
"*Manic Miner* was developed and published by a Liverpool based company, Bug Byte, back in 1983 and its sequel, *Jet Set Willy* was made by Software Projects, which is also a Liverpool based company."
Kevin Oxland, Spiral House

LOCAL LEGENDS
"One Liverpool studio of the past that gets overlooked, in my mind, is Psygnosis pre-Sony. In their time, they were pioneering and to some extent, shaped our industry. Apart from developing and publishing some of the greatest classic games of all time, such as *Lemmings* and *Shadow of The Beast*, they were cutting edge, pushing technology to its limits. For good or bad, and very controversial at the time, they also defined FMV, something we couldn't do without in today's big games. And we all remember the fantastic and distinctive box art, which also filtered through to the game art."
Kevin Oxland, Spiral House

FEELING HUNGRY?
"Not many people know that scouse is a type of stew. It has been eaten by Liverpudlians since the 1900s. Ingredients include lamb or beef, cabbage, carrot, potatoes and onions."
Ivan Davies, Catalyst Outsourcing

Above: Liverpool was the European city of culture in 2008

Develop In Liverpool

AFTER THE success of the first Develop in Liverpool conference last year, the event returns to the development hub that has in recent years courted a reputation as a leading cultural destination for many of the UK's creative industries.

The one-day Develop in Liverpool conference takes place on Thursday, November 25th at the Hilton Hotel Liverpool. The show includes three tracks and a number of networking sessions, culminating with a post event drinks reception. The conference will take place alongside Software City, which is organised by Merseyside ICT.
liverpool.develop-conference.com

The Develop in Liverpool programme promises delegates a broad range of high quality sessions, delivering expert insight and practical take-away knowledge for developers of all discipline. Here we pick some of the event's scheduled highlights.

OPENING KEYNOTE: Seeing is Believing: 3D a New Creative Medium for Games
Mick Hocking, senior director, Studio Liverpool, Evolution Studios, and BigBig Studios
The entire keynote is presented in full HD 3D, at the Odeon Cinema Liverpool. So yep, you have to wear glasses.

Building the Magic: Fun with Licensors
Arthur Parsons, lead designer, Traveller's Tales

Kinect: A Whole New Business
Philip Oliver, CEO, Blitz Games Studios

Innovation in the Fast Lane: A Driving Game Designer Mash-up
Charnjit Bansi, Bizarre Creations and Nick Baynes, Disney Black Rock

Putting Formula 1 back into Pole Position
Paul Jeal, senior producer F1 2010 and Stephen Hood, chief games designer, F1 2010, Codemasters

Designing for Kinect - The Lessons from Fighters Uncaged
Pascal Luban, AMA Studios

Hohokum: The First Three Years
Ricky Haggett, Honeyslug and Richard Hogg, independent artist and illustrator

Developing a Games Culture in the Business World
Ashraf Hegab, Orange

User-Generated Content and Social Networking on Xbox Live
Ben Board, Microsoft Xbox

A Brief Walk Through the State of the Art Technologies and Tools Today
Lee Sandberg, Colorod

PC Profiling Made Easy with Intel Graphics Performance Analysers
Leigh Davies, Intel

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1999 - ProDG for PS2

2003 - ProDG User Guide

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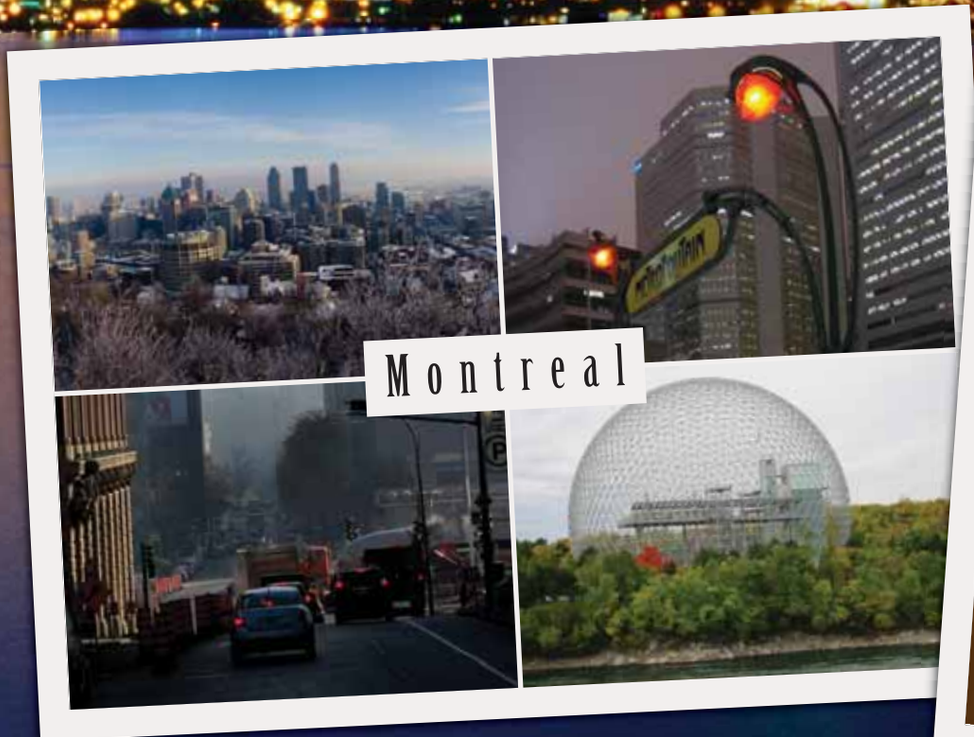
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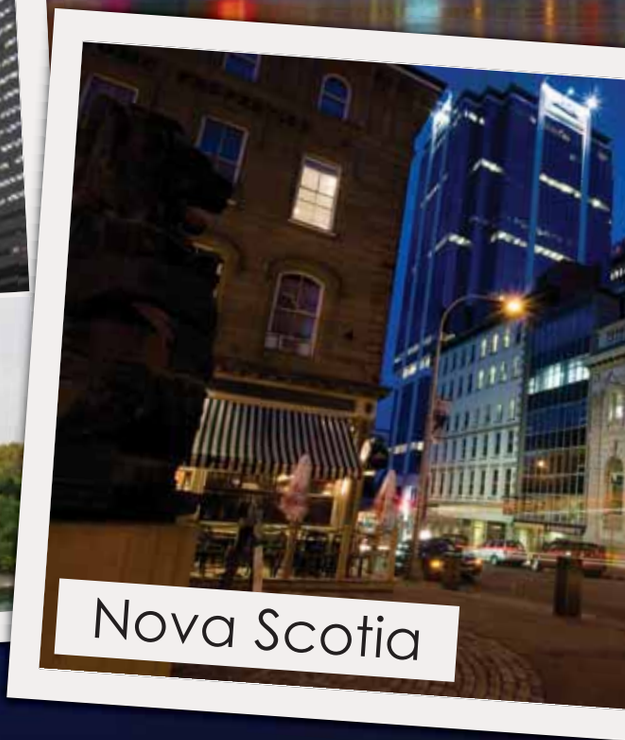
Nova Scotia

WISH YOU WERE HERE?

Thousands of UK developers have already made the move to Canada. Will you be next? Over the next 21 pages **Stuart Richardson** and **Will Freeman** look at why game dev hubs in Vancouver, Ontario, Montréal and Nova Scotia are booming...

WHY CANADA THRIVES AS THE UK SHRINKS

1 AN OUTSTANDING QUALITY OF LIFE

Vast, clear skies. Rugged, beautiful terrain. Wealth, land, health and a strong, multicultural society. Canada can make you happier just thinking about it.

2 A ROBUST INDUSTRY WITH JOB SECURITY

A government that goes out of its way to support games development at both national and regional levels has produced a sector powerhouse.

3 AFFORDABLE AND GENEROUS HOUSING

With more land to play with than your average Brit could easily comprehend, houses in the provinces generally come with gardens the size of the Scottish Highlands. They look quite similar, too.

4 FORWARD THINKING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Development-related courses at schools and universities in Canada feed into industry careers with a professional ease that the UK setup simply cannot match at any level.

5 A CHANCE TO WORK ON BLOCKBUSTER IP

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood, *FIFA 11*, *Dead Rising 2*, and *Mass Effect 2* have all come out of Canadian development this year alone. In Canada, it rains blockbusters.

6 A FIERCELY CREATIVE INDIE SCENE

As the industry evolves, Canadian indies are leading the way in casual, mobile and online games. Turn over to find out more...

BRITISH

Above: Vancouver rests among some of the most dramatic scenery in Canada

The westernmost of the Canadian provinces, British Columbia is a region renowned for its stunning natural beauty. Home to one of the largest individual studios on the planet in EA Canada's sprawling Vancouver campus, BC also has a strong development community that has undergone an impressive ongoing growth spurt that has rolled on for the past few years.

"There are lots of benefits of working in British Columbia," says Jonathan Dowdeswell, general manager of THQ's Relic Entertainment Studio.

"The fact that we have a big development industry means that there's a really strong talent pool, and that the local schools are getting more sophisticated in their graduation of the stars of the future.

> ***"Vancouver is a beautiful place with an incredible lifestyle potential in all seasons. It's relatively easy to attract people from far away if we need to."***
>
> Jonathan Dowdeswell, THQ

"Additionally, Vancouver is just a beautiful place, with an incredible lifestyle potential that runs the gamut from metropolitan living to outdoor recreation, in all seasons, so it's relatively easy to attract people from far away if we need to."

The region is also fortunate enough to have the British Columbia Interactive Task Force (BCITF), a trade body-like organisation for developers in the region, which under the guidance of its chair Howard Donaldson represents the combined interests of the sector to the regional government.

"The BC Interactive Task Force is a great example of the community we have here in British Columbia", Donaldson, who is also VP of studio operations for the local Disney Interactive Studios, states.

"The Task Force was formed in 2009 by local leaders of the video game industry to work with the BC government on a long-term plan to support video game development in this province, and today more than 30 BC companies, ranging from large international publishers to small entrepreneurial developers, are represented by it."

THE TAX MAN

That unified engagement with the political scene in the region lead to the introduction of an Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit, a 17.5 per cent break on production costs, which came into working effect on September 1st of this year. This highly-anticipated tax break was met with a wave of positive responses from BC developers, all of whom have high hopes for its future effect on the region.

"It was pleasing to note the government's courageous decision to introduce a tax incentive during a time of grave economic restraint but the industry needed it, to stay

COLUMBIA

competitive and to be able to offer projects that will use our talent before they start looking outside the region," says managing director of Ubisoft Vancouver Bertrand Helias.

"Tax incentives should help our industry to plant the firm roots of a stronger digital infastructure which the industry along with academia must formulate and facilitate in order to maintain momentum in the region."

SVP and chief operating officer of EA Sports Pauline Moller agrees with that vision of the region's future.

"The Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit is a really positive development for the local games community," she enthuses.

"British Columbia has really stepped up to the plate."

STEP IN TIME

As encouraged as the community in the region seems by recent development, British Columbia has long been working in the wake of Québec, which has enjoyed the kind of financial benefits that are only now coming into effect in BC. Now that the playing field has been levelled in that regard however, developers in the latter region are excited about future competition.

"Québec has long recognised the value of investing in the sector, and it has led to the development of a local industry that's extremely healthy," agrees BCITF's Donaldson.

"We have a strong industry that will only improve in the future. Some of the world's biggest franchises live here, and there's an amazing level of local pool. Local studios will continue to produce hits, do new things in online and digital and continue to strengthen Canada's reputation as an industry leader."

> ***"We have a strong industry that will only improve in the future. Some of the world's biggest franchises live here, and there is amazing depth to the talent."***
>
> Howard Donaldson, BCTIF

That optimism seems to span the entire sector in British Columbia. However, it is also fused with a level-headed sensibility that stems from a culture built on hard work in what was traditionally a wild and difficult environment to live in.

Relic's GM Dowdeswell knows what he wants for the future of his studio, and it is a hope that would seem outlandish in some of the more furious centres of sector growth that have grown up and vanished almost overnight around the world.

"It's easy to grow a studio, but I think it's actually harder to keep it smaller and more intimate," he says.

"Now we are able to make a few games at once, and we have a great studio vibe. It is important to protect that, executing the highest quality in game design rather than growing to meet projects we could sign."

And that sums-up the development industry in British Columbia. Powerful, forward-thinking and yet dedicated to preserving the important work it is already performing. The future in the far Canadian West looks bright indeed.

Toronto's Got Game

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Fancy a Move to Canada?...

LONGTAIL STUDIOS

Longtail Studios was formed by Gérard Guillemot, one of the co-founders of Ubisoft Entertainment. Their mission is to create the next generation of character driven video games.

Longtail doesn't want to be the place you punch-in for work; they want to be place you are excited to go every day. The people who work at Longtail are passionate about games. They love playing games, talking about games, and of course, making games.

They are currently embarking on a massive expansion of their Halifax development team as they begin work on a new Playstation Move title!

About Halifax

Halifax, NS is a modern port city teeming with culture and heritage, as well as an impressive array of entertainment, attractions, fine restaurants, colourful gardens and lively nightlife.

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RELIC ENTERTAINMENT STUDIO

Founded: 1997
Headcount: Unspecified
Previous games: *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War, Company of Heroes*
Currently working on: *Space Marine*

"THERE'S A really strong history between studios in British Columbia, and whenever something new opens, you can assume that within their first growth period they'll end up with a good cross-section of people from the city," Relic's general manager Jonathan Dowdeswell says.

"There is a lot of support for each other here. Most of the studio leaders know each other, and everyone knows how hard it can be for studios to succeed."

Not that Relic seems to struggle. Over the past decade or so, the studio has produced some of the most popular and acclaimed RTS titles of the current generation.

"The only real difficulty is that it can be challenging to convince people to just up and move their entire lives to another part of the globe. The industry is established enough that there is a pre-existing acknowledgement of the serious levels of development talent around here, as well as a lot of interesting games to work on," Dowdeswell says.

"However, sometimes people are just wary of uprooting and moving to Canada from the US or Europe. Often we find someone that fits us culturally, but the move is just a bit too big for them."

But that won't hold Relic, or the community in British Columbia, back.

"I believe that we have some of the most talented developers in the world here," Dowdeswell enthuses.

"I'm certain the games industry here in British Columbia will continue to be a leading light in the future of the interactive entertainment business around the world."

www.relic.com

BC INTERACTIVE TASK FORCE

Founded: 2009
Headcount: 30+ firms

"THE BC Interactive Task Force is a great example of the community we have here in British Columbia," says the chair of the development community spokesbody in the region Howard Donaldson.

"The Task Force was formed in 2009 by local leaders of the video game industry to work with the BC government on a long-term plan to support video game development in this province.

"More than 30 BC companies, ranging from large international publishers to small entrepreneurial developers, are represented by the Task Force."

Donaldson is clearly, and rightly, proud of the work that his sector body has achieved for the games development community in British Columbia. Despite this, he has no intention of taking time out to bask in his achievements to date.

"Going forward, our mandate is to educate, promote and influence the the BC video games development industry with a single, unified voice," he continues.

"That includes continuing to work with the provincial government to implement and improve the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit, promote BC's industry in partnership with the provincial government, and encourage new investment in the local industry."

For Donaldson, these factors all contribute to the relevance of Canada as an international games development centre, and high esteem that the country holds from with in this position.

"Canada is already well known for making high quality games across multiple genres. As a country, it provides a great quality of life and is a desirable home and destination for world-class talent," he explains.

"You only really need to look at all the titles that are made here, and that Canada ranks as the number three video game developer in the world compared to being ninth in the world based on video game sales. It's something that this country is very proud of."

EA CANADA

Founded: 1983
Headcount: 1,800+
Previous games: *Skate* series, *Need for Speed* series
Currently working on: *The Sims 3: Late Night*

"WE HAVE such a deep history here in BC, going all the way back to Distinctive Software which started in 1982. We have our amazing campus here in Burnaby which is a great place to make games," says EA Canada vice president Pauline Moller.

"Being in the same time zone as California is an advantage, as is the pleasantness of the region and the strong local talent pool."

And clearly the overall effect of living within a development community in the verdant wilds of British Columbia is one the folks at EA Canada enjoy.

"There's always been a very strong sense of community amongst the developers in the town. We know each other and while we compete for the best people and for sales, we also recognise that we all play a role in keeping our industry as healthy and positive as possible."

Moller is convinced that this has had a hugely affirmative effect on EA.

"Our BC-based business is anchored by our EA Sports business, with blockbuster franchises life *FIFA, NHL, Fight Night,* and others. It has also been home to the *Need For Speed* franchise since its inception more than 15 years ago," she explains.

"Working in BC has allowed us to attract and retain world-class talent to drive world-class titles."

"We think that the products speak for themselves in relation to our reputation on the global stage. Two of the biggest franchises of all time, *FIFA* and *Need For Speed*, were originated in BC and continue to thrive. Our studio is one of the most successful in the entire world and it's testament to the quality of our products and the amazing talents of our team."

www.ea.com

UBISOFT VANCOUVER

Founded: 2009
Headcount: 115
Previous games: *Academy of Champions, Pure Football*
Currently working on: Unannounced

"BRITISH COLUMBIA benefits from unique, tech-savvy talent that Canada boasts and is the birthplace of video games development for Canada," enthuses Ubisoft Vancouver managing director Bertrand Helias.

"Still be the location of a critical mass of game developers, the province can build on its successes and continue being a leading world force for games development."

That enthusiasm spreads to the work that this young studio is busy cracking on with as well.

"Vancouver is known for some huge sport franchises so logically, the studio started by working on sport titles – specifically five-a-side soccer games, first *Academy of Champions* for the Wii and *Pure Football* for 360 and PS3," Helias explains.

"These projects managed to bring talent in and to create an Ubisoft culture. Now teams have started tackling different genres and they are facing the challenge of bringing quality and innovation to the next round of products."

Armed with that rolling start in hand, Helias is determined that his studio will contribute to what he sees as the lofty standing which he believes the Canadian industry holds internationally.

"Canada has always been well-positioned in the creative & technology industries. Canada's population is concentrated in urban centres," he says.

"This allows each new generation to grow up with easy access to media and technology making Canadians very tech savvy and therefore some of the world's best game developers. Canadians are known for being early adopters and can adapt easily to technology transitions.

"Because of this unique reputation, it seems only natural that Canada should be seen as a global leader within the international development community and it is certainly not surprising that Canada is now third in rank for video game development worldwide."

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NESTLED BESIDE FOUR GREAT LAKES, YOU'LL FIND ONE IMMENSE TALENT POOL.

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Above: the sprawling regional capital of Toronto

Home to both the most populous Canadian city of Toronto and the national capital of Ottawa, Ontario is a hub of metropolitan life in a country with more than a few gleaming cityscapes spread out across its (mostly) untamed terrain.

"Ontario is really the engine that drives the rest of Canada in terms of economic activity, academic institutions and the like," says Bedlam Games CEO Trevor Fencott.

"We benefit greatly by having so many top quality schools in the area and a government that understands our business. Ontario is also a huge centre of film and television production, so we also have a lot of cross-over talent coming from those industries.

"We're actually located right in the heart of Toronto, Canada's largest city. It is one of the most multicultural and cosmopolitan cities in the world which really helps to attract and retain top talent."

COME TOGETHER

Much of the games development scene in the region is located in the capital city of Toronto. With such a volume of talented digital entertainment professionals living in the town, Ubisoft Toronto's managing director Jade Raymond points out the obvious benefits of establishing a development studio in an emerging, city-based development community.

"There is definitely a sense of community here in Toronto. The IGDA chapter here is about to be 're-launched' with Ubisoft producer Lesley Phord-Toy as its new president," she says. "There is the HandEye Society, which has a strong indie focus, and great companies are established throughout Ontario. Bedlam Games, Silicon Knights, Digital Extremes and some smaller mobile and indie studios.

> ***"With the growth of the digital distribution model and the slight shift in the role of publishers, Ontario is standing out more and more."***
>
> Damir Slogar, Big Blue Bubble

"The diversity of studios makes the province a great place where an even stronger community will most likely develop. We have high hopes for Toronto."

CEO of Big Blue Bubble Games Damir Slogar describes a shifting landscape in the national development scene.

"To a certain degree, Ontario has been in the shadow of Québec and British Columbia because they both have several major publishers located there," he states.

"With the growth of the digital distribution model and the slight shift in the role of publishers that now sees them as not the only option for funding, Ontario is standing out more and more."

And Slogar expects that new national position to have a very positive effect on his own business.

"We expect our studio to double in size over the next two years, and I see a similar trend with some of the other studios that we work closely with.

"The amount of change in the industry in the past year or so is unprecedented, so the type of industry we have in Ontario, with predominantly small developers, can only benefit from these changes as we will be able to adapt very fast."

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Raymond is also noticeably excited about the future for the region.

"We are convinced that Toronto will in time become another great games development city for Canada. Indeed, Toronto has not yet been established as a gaming city, and Vancouver and Montréal have been far more present and recognised in what is Canada's

TARIO

still short history of video game development," she says.

"Vancouver is closer to Asia, while Montréal is a hybrid city, halfway culturally and geographically between Europe ad the USA. Now, Toronto has many other advantages, and we are sure that our newest studio will succeed within our group, and contribute to the Canadian industry's growth."

That expected growth will be built on strong relationships between universities and individual studios, as well as the development industry as a whole.

> ***"Toronto universities and colleges have been training video game experts for the past few years and our plan is to start collaborating with them."***
>
> Jade Raymond, Ubisoft Toronto

"Toronto universities have been training video game experts for the past few years and our plan is to collaborate with them to make sure that what they teach corresponds to the industry's goals," Raymond explains.

"We bring the practical knowledge, they have teaching resources. It fits."

Trevor Fencott considers his company fortunate to be doing business in a region with the kind of links to education that Ontario offers.

"As an industry we have been very very lucky. Because of the huge film and television industry here in Ontario, schools have been turning out world-class digital talent for some time now.

"They have definitely been very receptive to working with us to make their programs even more relevant to the gaming industry."

And Fencott also sees securing relationships with other local entertainment industries as the best course of action for building on the industry's notable successes to date.

"It never exactly made sense to me that films like *The Hulk* were made here, but the game was made somewhere else. In its own way, Ubisoft has recognised this power powerful synergy and the fact that Ontario has such deep strength on the cinematic side," he says.

Interesting things are going on in Ontario.

UBISOFT TORONTO

Founded: 2009
Headcount: 40
Previous games: N/A
Currently working on: Untitled *Splinter Cell* sequel

"THE GOVERNMENT of Ontario has been very clear in its desire to develop this growing sector," says Ubisoft Toronto managing director Jade Raymond.

"There are some great companies already established here in Ontario: Bedlam Games, Silicon Knights, Digital Extremes, smaller mobile studios, and indie studios. The diversity of studios makes the province a great place where an even stronger community will most likely develop."

And continuing development is exactly what Raymond has in mind, both for the new Ubisoft studio as well as for the city of Toronto in which it has been established.

"Our goal is to reach 800 employees by 2019. We are convinced that there is very strong talent in Toronto, and that Ontarians currently working for studios in other cities will be interested in coming back," she says.

Raymond is assured, and Ubisoft Toronto knows the direction in which it wants to be heading.

"The message from the Government of Ontario this year has been clear. They believe in this industry, they want it to grow."
www.ubi.com

WAGGWARE

Founded: 2000
Headcount: 70+

WAGGWARE HAS ben recuiting talented folk to the burgeoning Canadian IT industry for a decade now, and has significant experience and understanding of the fluctuations of the games development industry.

"The Ontario government has created extremely aggressive tax incentives to encourage growth in all areas of interactive media, including games. Companies are relocating and being founded in the region. In recruitment, we see this as being a significant growth opportunity," says accounts representitve Tanya Lunshof.

"Ontario does face a challenge competing with the more well established gaming communities in Montréal and Vancouver for talent. With more and more gaming companies arriving in Toronto we're hoping the developers that had to relocate to these areas to get work will start coming back to Ontario and filling the talent gap."

This understanding has also made those at Waggware acutely aware of the difficulties that the development industry faces today, and the potential solutions that exist for them.

"It's always challenging to find experienced senior talent such as architects. They are a limited resource and many are happy with their existing roles. Ontario has a smaller pool of existing talent due to its stage of growth as a game development area, but that also means it is an area of opportunity for those who have skills and ambition to come and make their mark," Lunshof explains.

"We are very bullish on the opportunities for games development in Ontario. The provincial government has created large incentives for growing the sector and we have a number of post-secondary institutions offering educational packages that will help create new talent for the industry. Major companies are already opening offices here, and we see that trend accelerating."
www.waggware.com

BIG BLUE BUBBLE GAMES

Founded: 2004
Headcount: 55+
Previous games: *Destroy All Humans!*, *Red Faction II* (mobile)
Currently working on: Untitled 3DS project

REPRESENTING ONE of the substantial and healthy indie scene studios in Ontario, Big Blue Bubble has been producing a vast and exciting array of material for mobile, iOS, PC, GBA and Facebook since its founding in 2004. That rolling development has produced a positive perspective among those at the studio.

"We expect our studio to roughly double in size in the next two years, and I can see a similar trend in studios we work with," says CEO Damir Slogar.

"The amount of change in the industry in the last year or so – with new business models, new platforms, boom of social gaming and the like – is unprecedented, so the type of industry we have in Ontario can only benefit from these changes as we will be able to adapt very fast."

Slogar has an understanding of the kind of community his studio relies on for this confident outlook.

"Developers that focus on the technology aspect can leverage the federal R&D tax credit. There are many other initiatives and funds that are geared towards specific aspects of game development."
www.bigbluebubble.com

BEDLAM GAMES

Founded: 2006
Headcount: 60+
Previous games: *Scratch: The Ultimate DJ*
Currently working on: Unannounced

FOUNDED BY former Rockstar Toronto developers back in 2006, the staff at Bedlam Games boast a level of experience that many triple-A studios would envy.

"Bedlam is a transmedia-focused developer, and since Ontario is a film and television development hub, we will grow in the coming years," states CEO Trevor Fencott.

"We work actively with other media. One example of this is one of our upcoming projects, *Neuromancer*, based on the William Gibson novel. The idea is to work with the filmmakers from the beginning to make sure the work is as awesome as possible."

The reputation of Canadian development abroad is something that matters a great deal to Fencott and Bedlam Games.

"Canadians pay high taxes and invest public money into a world-class educational infrastructure. Our government believes in supporting the transition to a digital economy rather than propping up an antiquated manufacturing one.

"I suppose that is what people mean by a 'subsidy culture', although a 'forward-thinking investment culture' might be a more appropriate phrase."
www.bedlamgames.com

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Above: Montréal is home to a highly successful development scene

With around 80 per cent of its population speaking French as their first language, the large Canadian province of Québec is a home away from home for all those of a Gallic sensibility around the world.

Officially recognised as a nation within a unified Canada, the region also hosts an impressive mix of developers, publishers and tech firms thanks to its strong levels of sector support. In a country where games development thrives, Québec represents perhaps one of the most cutting-edge regions for industry incentives in the world.

"We have a multimedia tax credit of around 37.5 per cent of salaries," explains CEO of Funcom Games Canada Miguel Caron.

"R&D tax credit can go as high as 75 per cent of salaries. From that, Montréal has become the sixth-largest games developer in the world."

General manager of THQ Montréal Dave Gatchel highlights the volume of industry professionals entering the region through educational routes and international recruitment as another cause of its development strength.

> ***"The most important factor is talent, and Québec has great talent. Financial incentives are also important, but we are in the business of making great games."***
>
> Dave Gatchel, THQ Montréal

"There is a large and talented workforce to draw from, a very strong university system, an attractive and cost efficient business environment, and government sponsored financial incentives," he says.

"For us the most important factor is the talent, and Québec has great talent. The financial incentives are also important considerations; however, we are in the business of making great games, which makes acquiring talent our top priority."

The pillars of support and staff also seem to stand upon a great deal of public and business goodwill, as well as aid for the video games sector.

LEADER OF THE PACK

"The sense of community extends beyond our industry and permeates other sectors as well," Gatchel agrees.

"It encompasses private and public organisations, which might not be unique, but it is certainly uncommon when you look at similar hubs worldwide."

In Québec, of course, that community also extends to the wide variety of technology, tools and service firms which back up and fill out the development scene in the region, producing an almost entirely self-sufficient centre of video games production.

Bruce Stamm, VP of QA at Babel Media, jokes about the ease with which his firm does business there within that arrangement.

"The only challenge is getting people to relocate to Montréal because of our cold winters," he says, laughing.

"The amount of red tape is minimal and the Québec government has been extremely helpful in both the establishment of our

UÉBEC

studio as well as aiding us with multiple business expansions."

Ties with local education is also just as important for the sector services industry as for the development studios in terms of maintaining the quality of the workforce.

> ***"The community's ecosystem is delicate, but I think studios will find a way to grow and prosper. The recruitment of top international talent will help."***
>
> Stephane D'Astous, Eidos

"We all realise that it is important to get involved in order to make sure we get properly trained resources," states Audiokinetic's VP of sales and marketing Geneviève Laberge.

"With more and more companies opening offices and studios in Montréal, this will continue to be important. I do think that more experienced people should get involved with the schools and universities to either teach or help build curriculums that match what companies need from employees today."

UNDER PRESSURE

It has not escaped the attention of those studios and companies that have established themselves in Québec, however, that the region has over 7,000 working developers, and is rapidly approaching what, elsewhere in the world, would be considered critical mass for an industry.

"With the addition of three new major studios in Funcom, THQ and Warner Brothers in the last year or so, people might think that this should be the end," says Eidos Montréal GM Stephane D'Astous.

"But we think a little differently. The ecosystem is delicate, but studios will find a way to grow and prosper. The increasing international recruitment of talent and the alignment with local schools will definitely help us to remediate this great challenge."

Nicolas Rioux, MD of Ubisoft Québec, is confident that these issues will not effect the overall reputation and output of the region or the country as a whole.

"It's quite impressive for the country to be ranked in the top three countries in the world with a pool of somewhere around 35m people. The ratio of game developers per capita across the country is incredibly high, it's striking," he says.

"Today we know we have all the government support we need on both the provincial and the federal levels, and we hope to have the level of talent to sustain the level of quality and industry recognition that we currently have.

"We are all judged on our final product."

THQ MONTRÉAL

Founded: 2010
Headcount: Unconfirmed
Currently working on: Unannounced

HAVING RECENTLY snapped up *Assassin's Creed* creator Patrice Désilets from his Ubisoft retirement, new kid in school THQ Montréal has been making waves even before major work at the studio has begun. As a development studio and focused production facility, THQ Montréal is likely to get busy, quickly. General manager Dave Gatchel plans to draw strength for this task from the region of Québec itself.

"There is a large and talented workforce to draw from here, a very strong university system, an attractive and cost-efficient business environment and government sponsored financial incentives," he says.

"These incentives helped facilitate the design and build-out of our facility. In addition, the existing workforce concentrated on game development has enabled us to generate interest and attract a large number of highly skilled candidates."

And those incentives clearly motivated THQ to push hard for the new facility to come into being as smoothly as possible.

"Québec believes it is important to preserve its culture; it has implemented some regulations to ensure that key aspects are maintained, primarily focused around the use of French" Gatchel explains.

"In dealing with these regulations our approach has been to fully comply, but to minimise the impact by planning for these differences during the studio set-up.

"By planning and implementing systems to accommodate these regulations up-front, we believe that compliance will become an integrated part of our whole studio culture."

That effort is most certainly expected to pay off as well.

"THQ Montréal is actually expected to become the largest development entity within the company, expanding THQ's global network and increasing efficiencies within its studio system.

"I believe that the future for game development in Québec is bright."

www.thq.com

FRIMA STUDIO

Founded: 2003
Headcount: 250+
Previous games: *Young Thor, Widget's Odyssey*
Currently working on: Unannounced

REPRESENTING THE indie scene that has built up within the stately Québecian development ecosystem, Frima Studio has built up a very impressive momentum since its founding seven years ago.

This doesn't mean that it has not had many challenges to face down, however.

"Finding video games programmers and artists who have ten to 15 years of experience and who live in Québec is actually quite a challenge," explains the studio's CEO Steve Couture.

"We have put together a very great package of social benefits for our employees: chair massage during work hours, flexible work schedule, free bus pass, free time to work on personal creative projects during work hours.

"The challenge is to attract people of good experience into key positions within in our organisation."

The rapid growth that has come to define the plucky studio seems to be continuing at a fast and unabated pace, and Couture is assured that Québec as a business entity has made this impressive expansion process possible for Frima.

"We have announced, thanks to investment in our training program, that we can hire up to 140 new employees for Frima in the next three years.

"The relationships with the local, provincial and federal governments are excellent. The industry benefits from tax credits for production, tax breaks for R&D, and the availability of the Canadian Media Fund to support creation of brand new Intellectual Properties, some of which Frima has already received.

"This June we received a joint investment of $2m from the Québec Government. Now we want to put forward more IPs and develop our brands."

And so work continues at Frima, driven on by the momentum of its young back catalogue and a confidence in the work it has yet to complete.

www.frimastudio.com

ENZYME TESTING LABS

Founded: 2002
Headcount: 300+

A MULTI-LINGUAL QA testing company is a great idea in any games market, but when Yan Cyr and Emmanuel Viau set up Enzyme testing labs in French-speaking Canada, they knew well enough that they would be working at an international crossroads were a grasp of several languages sets a company apart from its competition.

"For Enzyme, our growth is from a variety of markets, not just the North American market," explains Enzyme president and CEO Cyr.

"We see a lot of opportunity in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of testing methodology and technologies, in addition to focusing on value added services that makes us more of a development partner with the developers and publishers we work with around the world."

And the tailoring of a focus towards digital entertainment within the institutions of the entire Québec province has lead to the region serving Cyr well in the role of a base of operations.

"Québec is great place to do business. The economic and political climate is favourable to the video game industry, there are many schools and institutions that also give us access to a pool of qualified and mostly bilingual resources," he explains.

"As with any strategic growth industry, the government here facilitates expansion and supports development efforts through a variety of means like training and some tax credit incentives."

It is that strong regional contribution across the country to the overall powerhouse that is national games development which Cyr sees as reason for the current successes of the Canada.

"Well, I think its quite clear that Canada is a leader in the industry. You just have to look at the number of internationally renowned studios that operate in Québec and Canada and some of the titles that have been produced here are some of the most successful ones in the world."

www.enzyme.org

AUDIOKINETIC

Founded: 2000
Location: Montréal

BEST KNOWN for its outstanding Wwise audio pipeline solution, Audiokinetic has established itself internationally as the company to beat in terms of video games audio solutions. The Wwise package has become synonymous with the notion of the highest quality solutions available today.

"Our main focus at Audiokinetic is to provide the most complete audio pipeline to game developers. We have been focusing not only on improving our audio solution Wwise but also to offer a variety of plugins and options to the professional game audio creators," says vice president of sales and marketing Geneviéve Laberge.

"Not only do we consult our international user base, but we also leverage some of the local talent when we need to get some feedback new ideas that we have had. Audio is frequently outsourced and we have some great local talent when it comes to offering services, companies like Game On Audio or Wave Generation among others come to mind."

Audiokinetic is happy with its position in one of the world's leading games industries.

"There are numerous incentives to get involved in the industry. The goal of the tax credits is to drive innovation and local employment. Beyond the government help, I think that a few important factors that also make Canada appealing," Laberge says.

"The cost of living is very reasonable, we offer a great quality of life and a good educational and health care system, there is a real ecosystem present making it possible to actually have a career and allowing you to evolve and a solid and sound economy."

As Audiokinetic sees it, that positivity is set to continue on into the development community of tomorrow. The company hopes to be there, at the fine edge of the audio pipeline industry.

"With all the entrepreneurial talent, support from our Government and creativity this country has to offer, I certainly think we have what is takes."

www.audiokinetic.com

UBISOFT MONTRÉAL

Founded: 1997
Headcount: 1,800+
Previous games: *Assassin's Creed, Prince of Persia*
Currently working on: *Your Shape: Fitness Evolved, Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*

UBISOFT IS a development powerhouse, today boasting a successful back catalogue that many will seek to emulate.

"Over the years, Ubisoft has built an extremely strong and creative workforce in the Province of Québec, one of the most important in the industry worldwide. This represents an advantage for us in many ways but I think the results speak for themselves," says managing director Nicolas Rioux.

"Today, in Québec, Ubisoft has 2,500 employees in its studios in Montréal, Québec City and at Hybride Technologies, a special effects firm located in the Laurentians that Ubisoft acquired in back in 2008."

There is a consistency to the work of Ubisoft Montréal that holds it in a great position in regards to the region's development future.

"In 13 years, the industry has grown exponentially in the province of Québec and it looks like it will continue to do so. On a more technical note, the new technologies like Kinect and 3DS will force us to reinvent ourselves as a publisher and as an industry," says Rioux, smiling.

"There is also a need to constantly evolve our current key franchises and ensure that we ship high-quality games. And we are all waiting to see what the next generation of consoles will bring to the table.

"Mobile and social gaming are also going to take a larger portion of the pie of our industry. Ubisoft Montréal and Ubisoft Québec are well positioned in each of these segments and we are definitely excited by the future."

www.ubi.com

BIOWARE MONTRÉAL

Founded: 2009
Headcount: 700+ (inc. all EA Montréal assets)
Previous games: *Mass Effect 2*
Currently working on: *Mass Effect* franchise

BioWare Montréal began operating out of parent company EA's Montréal studio back in 2009, contributing significantly to the popular RPG sequel *Mass Effect 2*. Studio director Yanick Roy believes firmly that the studio's future is massively dependent on the strong development community around it.

"There's a great tradition of game development here in Québec so top-class talent knows this is a great place to create top-class games and entertainment," he says.

"EA in Montréal works very closely with the local institutions, in areas like internships and other partnerships. We recognise the need to invest in the next generation of game developers for this market."

And Roy believes the strength of that market is drawn from the many institutions that revolve around games development and business in general.

"Québec has shown foresight in building out positive economic conditions for the video game industry, and it's resulted in the development of a thriving and exciting industry in the province.

"The tax credits are a very positive contributor to the growth that's occurred. The provincial government are great partners of our industry."

Although it seems BioWare may be actively involved in dialogue related to exisiting industry systems.

"We also need a long term vision that ensures Québec can be sustainable for future, and known for its quality not simply its low costs. There is a risk of diluting the talent pool if too many players are coming to Montréal too quickly," Roy says.

"BioWare is continuing to grow in Montréal and will be doubling our local team size this year. We look forward to continuing that path with our Montréal studio."

www.bioware.com

BABEL MEDIA

Founded: 2005
Location: Montréal

"I WOULD hope that the sector here is seen as a leader," says vice president of QA and multi-services firm Babel Media Bruce Stamm.

"With many of the major studios having some presence in Canada, I think both the level of innovation and quality of product coming out of Canada is exceptional."

QA, audio and translations services are big business, and in a region where triple-A production outshines several other big development centres, Babel Media sees big business indeed.

"We work with pretty much all the major publishers and studios with interests here, including Activision-Blizzard, Eidos, Electronic Arts, THQ and Ubisoft. More and more, these customers are looking for one provider of multiple services.

"I think we are pretty unique in being able to provide this."

The firm has great expectations about the work that will be involved in providing services to an industry going through rapid change.

"Being an ex-software engineer, what excites me is testing Kinect games and the inherent challenges in that. Consideration needs to be made for additional space; lighting; different body types used for testing; and even different dialects for testing of the voice recognition technology," Stamm says.

"Babel made a significant investment earlier in the year to set-up Kinect Testing Labs and we have proven to be a trusted supplier for many publishers in recent months."

Stamm has faith in Québec.

"What will sustain Québec is the spirit of innovation and the quality of talent that is currently working in local companies," he says.

"Innovation is tough to clone."

www.babelmedia.com

VOLTA CREATIONS

Founded: 2006
Location: Québec City

ART OUTSOURCING is a difficult thing to do right, and Volta Creations should know it. Supplying top-flight artwork to some of the biggest of the big triple-A games that have been developed and are currently in-development around the globe, the firm has a track record that places them in the front of row their sector.

"We have roughly a dozen ongoing triple-A projects at any moment, from single-asset assignments like marketing posters to hundred-asset long term projects. *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood, Red Faction Armageddon, FEAR 3, Rage* and *Deus Ex Human Revolution* are amongst the most recent of these," says business development manager Sebastien Caisse.

Caisse is also very conscious of the manner in which Canada is viewed by the development community worldwide.

"On the corporate side of things, you have this sweeping oversimplification about the key role of tax breaks that clouds the deeper dynamics that really made it work as a hub," he says.

"I hope it stays that way if it means competing governments miss the point, but I do hope the development community perceives it as a hub of creativity rather than a hub of tax incentives. On the talent and consumer side of things, I hope it simply becomes known as a place where great games are made."

Despite these tentative concerns, there is a serious underlying faith in the future of Québec.

"Québec is ripe for indies. The UK got its first game hits years ago, so entrepreneurs gained investors' trust. This could happen here.

"I love working here."

www.volta.ca

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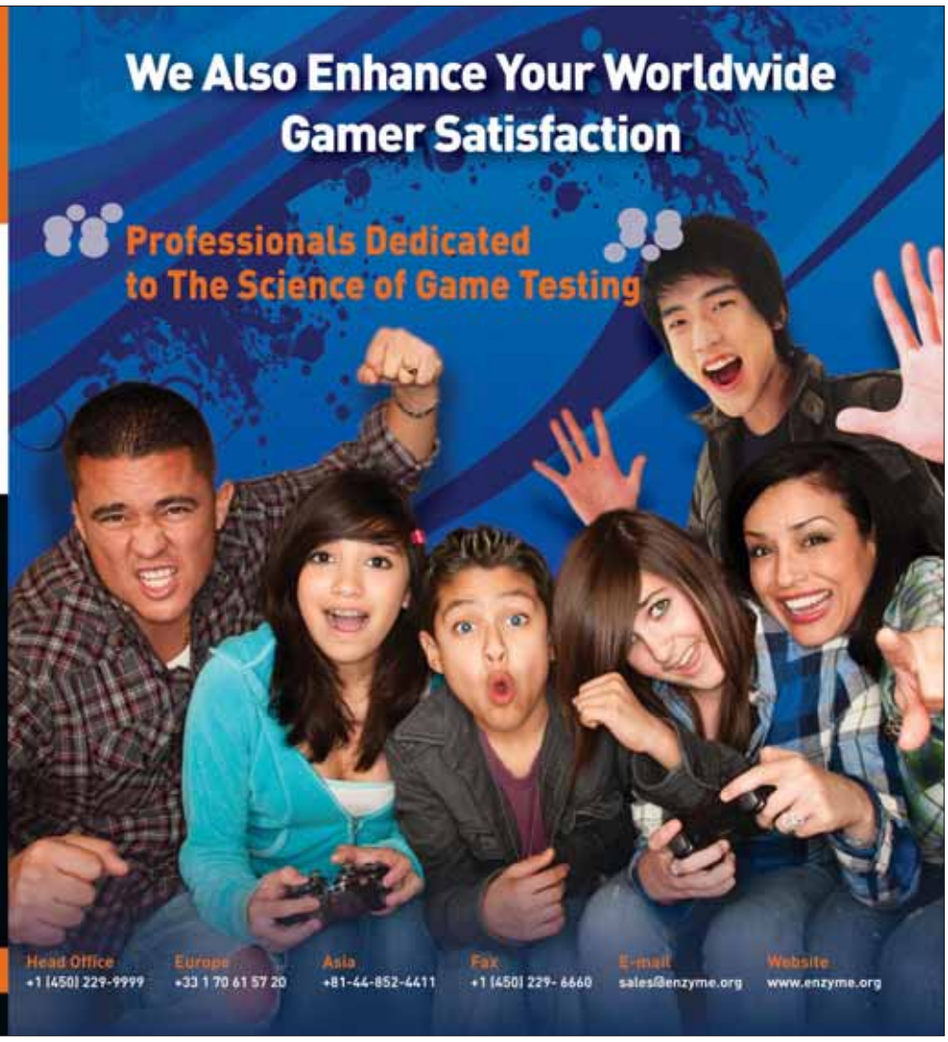

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Nova

Above: Nova Scotia's capital city Halifax is cosmopolitan and energetic (top)

The south-eastern province of Nova Scotia is a beautiful and enchanting corner of Canada. Currently wrapped in a blanket of oranges as autumn grips the region, its rolling hills and dense woodland paint a vision of rural bliss.

Even the most heaving towns have a placid charm, and there is open space in an abundance that will be somewhat alien to those entrenched in Europe's packed cities.

Yet Nova Scotia is no rustic backwater. Its urban spaces have a youthful, cosmopolitan feel, and across the cities and towns a development sector is cementing its reputation, gaining momentum and expanding ambitiously.

It may not yet rival the likes of Ontario and Québec in terms of industry headcount, but Nova Scotia appears to be booming. The provincial government's Digital Media Tax Breaks are well established, and a number of trade bodies such as Nova Scotia Business Inc work tirelessly to assist developers of all sizes.

"The support that is in place in Nova Scotia has allowed the development industry to ride out the transition of the last couple of years and we have been able to keep the number of people employed that we have," explains Alastair Jarvis, studio head at HB Studios' main office in the town of Lunenberg. "It would have been a very different story without the tax credit in place."

"We've got – and still get – a big support from NBSI," adds states Estelle Jaquemard, general manager at Longtail Studios, which has expanded from Québec to set up a space in Halifax, the provincial capital that is just under six-hours plane flight from the UK.

"They've been working with Longtail for a few years now and propose to companies like us a payroll rebate. They work also with the financial minister to define the multimedia credit. On another level, for someone like me who is new here, they provide a lot of advice and contacts when I need specific services.

"NSBI also provides aggressive assistance to the industry with labour rebates, hiring incentives and as a lobbyist for significant labour tax credits from provincial government," states Willie Stevenson, founder of Silverback Productions, which is based in a fashionable neighboured in Halifax. "The organisation also provides critical networking between game companies, educational institutions and industry representatives globally.

A WAY OF LIFE

Tax breaks and trade bodies are one thing, but neither of those attributes are unique to Nova Scotia. Spend some time with the province's developers though, and you'll hear much about a way of life that Nova Scotian's seem to feel is the region's strongest asset.

"Nova Scotia brings a style of life that is attractive to many of our employees," says Wes Gould, division manager of branded browser gaming specialist TheREDspace. "Nova Scotia is definitely a place where you can feel comfortable moving your family to. This works well for us, because the clients we work for are some of the best in the world."

Gould is not alone in highlighting plenty of other advantages that bolster Nova Scotia's culture and environment as a powerful recruitment tool, from short commute times and a low cost of living to friendly maritime and an economy that leaves plenty of disposable income

There's also a strong sense that the Nova Scotian development industry is increasing it's potency and size with a newfound energy.

"It's early days here in Nova Scotia, but I think it is true that, particularly in the last couple of years, the development industry in the region is gaining momentum," suggests Jarvis.

"We'll hopefully see an IGDA chapter set up here, and other ways of mentoring and supporting new developers. That what was great about Toronto about five years ago, and that's what we need here."

To succeed, however, a provincial industry with a global view needs a balanced ecosystem. While Nova Scotia makes for a very tempting proposition for those looking

Scotia

to move to a new country for a better life, it still needs local talent and resource to remain sustainable. Fortunately, the area's industry and educational establishments are forming a union that should prove beneficial to all.

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

"Many educational institutions here recognise the potential of the video game business and tailor their programs accordingly," confirms Stevenson. "This is true both on the technical and programming side and the artistic side."

To that end, Nova Scotia's Acadia University has been working with local studios to offer a course that can serve as a valuable asset to the province's develop industry.

"We've had such great interest from the Nova Scotia industry, from people like NSBI, and students in the area. It seemed like a natural course to offer Nova Scotia," says Daniel Silver, associate professor and director of the university's Computer Science department, which now offers a game development specialisation at degree level.

"A lot of our previous students have found themselves working at places like HB Studios. The word that we're getting from these companies is that in the area of programming they want good, core knowledge, and the quality of our existing programmes here has always provided that. But there were things missing around the periphery missing, and that's why we consulted with HB and others. We have our alumni links to thank."

TOUGH TIMES

Despite the collective effort of government, industry and academia, there are of course challenges for Nova Scotia. As a smaller region on the rise, Nova Scotia must compete for visibility of the province in Canada and in Europe. Attracting staff and companies remains an ongoing effort.

> ***"It's early days here in Nova Scotia, but I think it is true that in the last couple of years, the development industry in the region is gaining momentum."***
>
> Alastair Jarvis, HB Studios

"Canada now has an international reputation as the best place for the video game industry. So, it facilitates the recruitment," says and upbeat Jaquemard, but she highlights the fact that Nova Scotia's strength can be its weakness. Good studios and a good education system create great talent, but it is talent that can be tempted by a move to another province.

"The talent pool is growing quickly but is nowhere near what one would find in Montréal, Vancouver or Austin Texas," suggests Stevenson. "Manning-up for projects requires HR departments casting a wide net. It's expensive and risky. Established talent might view Nova Scotia as a backwater and fear leaving more established epicentres of the video gaming industry."

Nova Scotia's people are hardy though, and the mutually supportive system of industry, education and government puts the area in good stead to rise as one of Canada's strongest development hubs.

On top of that, there is an admirable strength of community that sees local studios talk of one another with fondness, and sometimes go as far as staff sharing.

"We have a sense of community with every game studio we have met," concludes Matthew Doucette of two-man Nova Scotia indie Xona. "There are little to no friendly rivalries. There is a lot of respect that floats around effortlessly. We believe we can do 'our' games better than other developers, and I am sure it is visa versa."

With that kind of spirit, Nova Scotia has little to worry about.

Almost everywhere in Nova Scotia is close to the waterfront

HB STUDIOS

Founded: 2000
Headcount: 90+
Previous games: *2010 FIFA World Cup, Big Beach Sports*
Currently working on: *Rugby 2012* and various unannounced titles

THE EXTERIOR walls of HB Studios part a striking cultural contradiction. Inside the gleaming steel stairways and geek-chic wall hangings are typical of an energetic, contemporary developer. Outside, however, is the picturesque rural town of Lunenburg. It's an enviable juxtaposition that has played backdrop to ten years of success making high profile sports games for EA along with many other games.

"The biggest upside in Lunenburg is quality of life," confirms studio head Alastair Jarvis. "It affords us the opportunity to walk out the doors into such beauty, and for a lot of us, it's a huge benefit of working here. The way I think of it is that we live in one of the most beautiful towns in the most beautiful country in the world, and we get to make games we like".

HB Studios, which has also worked with the likes of Konami and THQ, is Nova Scotia's largest studio, and a case in point that demonstrates the province's capacity to play host to upscale developers. In fact, the studio currently at work on *Rugby 2012* is something of a poster child for the region's drive to increase its standing on the global stage. It has also benefited from Nova Scotia's generous provincial support.

"The support that is in place in Nova Scotia has allowed the development industry here to ride out the transition of the last couple of years, and we have been able to keep the number of people employed that we have here," confirms Jarvis. "It would have been a very different story without the tax credit in place."

Clearly besotted with the area, Jarvis is quick to highlight the advantages of Lunenburg's proximity to Halifax.

"The city has a vibrant arts community and a young vibe that is contributed to by the many universities and colleges in the city," he says.

Positioned perfectly to embrace Nova Scotia's quiet life and Halifax's urban bustle, HB Studios has it good.

www.hb-studios.com

XONA

Founded: 2008
Headcount: 2
Previous games: *Decimation X*
Currently working on: *Decimation X 2, Duality ZF, Score Rush*

IN STARK contrast to HB Studios, Xona consists of a two-man team working from a small office on the waterfront in the rural fishing town of Yarmouth. The company is a microstudio by any definition, but its size hasn't been an obstacle to progress.

Most famously, the team is at work on the hyperactive XBLA shmup *Duality ZF*, but it is its recently confirmed dealings with Microsoft with regard to the first Windows Phone 7 games that is most interesting.

The giant computing organisation was suitably impressed by Xona's work to approach it with a view secure two launch titles for the much hyped mobile handsets.

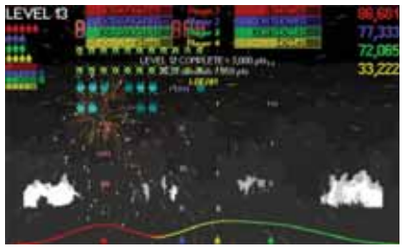
While the final details are still being inked, Xona's shooters *Decimation X 2* and *Score Rush* could become defining titles on Windows Phone 7, and as such have a potential that could see Xona expand significantly in the future.

"Xona Games will remain a moderate size until we obtain working capital, at which point we will expand by hiring contract work on a per-project basis," confirms studio co-founder Matthew Doucette.

"Eventually this will transform into a full-time position, most likely filling business and marketing positions first, to allow Jason and me to get back to the reason we are here in the first place, which is to make great games.

"Eventually our company will grow and potentially may split into two development sub-studios working on separate games. The growth potential is great, but we want to maintain the indie spirit."

www.xona.com



SILVERBACK PRODUCTIONS

Founded: 2005
Headcount: Up to 14
Previous games: *Mr. Jones Graveyard Shift, Empress of the Deep*
Currently working on: *Empress of the Deep 2* and an unannounced title

YOUTHFUL AND hip, Halifax's Silverback Productions made the bold move of suspending work on larger games to gain low-risk, high-payout revenue stream making casual titles.

The strategy worked, and the studio's games like have not only caught the eye of older female players in their droves, but also attracted some of the world's most prolific distribution channels, such as Big Fish and Gamehouse. As a result, Silverback are in a robust position, and poised to expand aggressively in the coming months.

"We expect to at least double our team to 30 people within the year," reveals president Willie Stevenson.

"We recognise that tax credits might not last for ever so we want to build a strong foundation on our own. Also, a growing industry regionally is a double-edged sword. More critical mass is good," he adds.

"But when big players move in its hard to compete with their human resources capabilities and so on. We have been able to roll with the punches so far."

www.silverbackgames.com

THEREDSPACE

Founded: 2000
Headcount: 65
Previous games: Projects for Nickleodeon, MTV, IBM and others
Currently working on: *FunGoPlay*

BASED IN a sizable studio in the Bedford area of Halifax city, TheREDspace has made an impressive niche for itself creating web games for high-profile clients. Particularly successful with broadcasters, the company's portfolio includes work for the likes of MTV, Nickleodeon and even the BBC.

The team isn't completely blinkered to branded entertainment though, and has an ambitious project of its own underway. *FunGoPlay* combines real world activity with a sport-themed virtual world, and demonstrates a motivated approach to new gaming forms that could serve TheREDspace well.

"We work in a high growth industry. I anticipate that we will continue to grow at a rapid rate," says division manager Wes Gould, later adding: "While the economy was in a downturn we were still recruiting and rapidly growing. I think it is safe to say that as long as we continue providing the high quality work that has made us attractive in the past, we will continue to receive more projects and will organically require times of rapid expansion."

www.theredspace.com

LONGTAIL STUDIOS

Founded: 2009 (2005 in Québec)
Headcount: 30 (in Nova Scotia)
Previous games: *Dance on Broadway*
Currently working on: Unannounced projects

INITIALLY FOUNDED by Gérard Guillemot – brother of Ubisoft CEO Yves – in Québec, Longtail set up a Nova Scotia studio in 2009.

Making games exclusively for Ubisoft, the company currently employs 30, but has an enormous working space ready to welcome many more.

"We're expecting around 60 in the next two or three years, which means more people, with families and more visibility as well," states Estelle Jaquemard, general manager of the Halifax-based office.

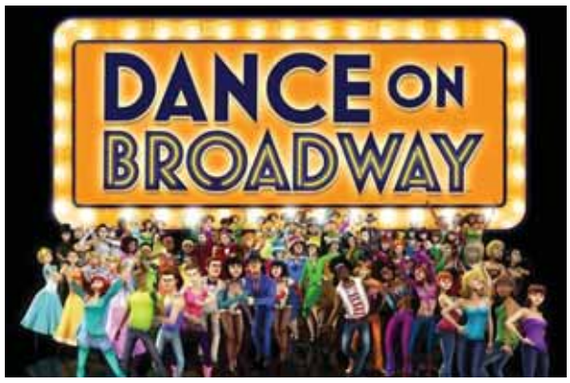
"The video game industry needs highly skilled people, and those people can attract others. Like every industry, I guess, the more you are, the more you can attract."

The Nova Scotia location compliments not only the Québec outfit, but Longtail bases in both New York and Canada's Prince Edward Island. Clearly, Nova Scotia's attributes rival some prime locations.

The studio's Wii game *Dance on Broadway* met with great success in the UK in particular, and laid the groundwork for more hits to land on retailers' shelves.

For now Longtail remains tight-lipped about its current project.

www.longtailstudios.com



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BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

"Through tunnels carved into skyscrapers, traffic soaring high." Dead End Thrills, p74

KEY RELEASE: Xaitment's new AI tools

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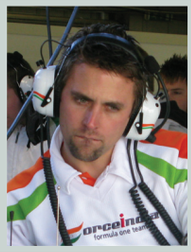
TRAINING: Aquiris' Unity 3 guide

p72

HEARD ABOUT: F1 2010's 'real' audio

p73



Start your engines

Stonetrip talks about the new version of Shiva, p66

EPIC DIARIES: Inxile's dungeon crawler The Hunted, p70

BUILDER OF WORLDS

Like its namesake the Shiva engine thrives in the act of creation. **Will Freeman** sat down with Stonetrip co-founder Philip Belhasen to find out what the company's recent 1.9 update means for those using the tech…

Stonetrip's CEO and co-founder Philip Belhasen says there is a space in the market for Shiva

What makes the release of Shiva 1.9 more significant than a simple update?
For us 1.9 represents a Shiva that is dedicated to developers. With this version we wanted to break the rules, and to help experienced studios develop great applications using Shiva.

The main differences are the access to native code, the ability to extend the engine abilities using plug-ins, the power to simplify and accelerate the development process, and finally, to allow final publishing through a really robust process.

If you were to choose one new feature that is the most important addition to 1.9, what would it be?
1.9's plugin features are the most important. It completely changes the way that the customers can develop using Shiva.

So what does that mean for the day-to-day work of a developer using 1.9?
Now there is no constraint. We free the constraints of development completely, so users can imagine everything they want, and use the plug-ins to achieve it. They can also integrate all the tools and middleware they want, so that they are free. The approach of Shiva is now that it is not just a good cross-platform tool; it is now also a complete native development kit.

> ***"With Shiva, we follow the business model of the internet. We are not doing it the same way as any of our competitors' game engines."***
>
> Philip Belhasen, Stonetrip

The business model for Shiva is quite distinct from its contemporaries. Why did you create the system you have in place?
The business model is very simple. If you have the free version of 1.9 you will be able to test any export you want. Shiva Basic – previously called Shiva Unlimited – allows you to export everything you want without any watermarks and without any limitations, and create as many titles as you want for as many platforms as you want.

The Advanced version, which is €1,500, is dedicated to the studios wanting all the services and tools for team development. Features such as performance reports let studios be really productive and create really commercial applications.

With Shiva, we follow the business model of the internet. We are absolutely not doing it the same way as any of our competitors' engines. They always charge royalties per platform and per title.

For developers that is complex and expensive. Stonetrip lets you buy the tools, buy the software, and use it as you want, without any limitation.

You mentioned your competitors, of which Unity and Epic are the most obvious examples. Where does Stonetrip fit? Is there space for you?
For us it is pretty easy. We work in a different market. Unreal, for example, works with high-

Shiva hopes to one day replace Flash

COMPANY: Stonetrip
SPECIALITY: Engine
KEY PRODUCTS: Shiva 1.9
CONTACT: Via web
WEB: www.stonetrip.com

profile studios, and is dedicated to triple-A games. Even though they talk a lot about casual gaming using Unreal engine, it is not really possible.

For our other competitors like Unity, all the customers we have that used Unity have said 'this platform is not really efficient. You cannot do everything you want'. They are limited because of the quality of the software and the robustness.

Of course, Unity is a strong competitor – a really strong one. But we think that we are not on that level of software. We propose our innovations and difference of business model. We think that we are closer to the internet, so we have a different approach from them.

The entire games industry is changing. Why is Stonetrip's offering relevant and important now?
Because inside our technology is all the systems, all the services and all of the tools to build the future, and to build for new business models, new distribution processes and a new kind of publishing. We are truly cross-platform and we provide the ubiquity of the user experience. This is why we feel we are at the right place at the right moment. We think that people like to start a game on PC and continue on mobile and finish wherever they are. This is what we provide, and that is the future. We are always adding new platforms.

> ***"It is very simple. We want to replace Flash, which is used everywhere, and is a great technology – but has a lot of stuff missing."***
>
> Philip Belhasen, Stonetrip

What would you say to people who would suggest being on so many platforms can be a weakness for and engine?
We have built an innovative technology to generate the perfect pipeline, for each platform, for each OS, and for each driver.

We can get the maximum of performance quality from not only every platform, but from every device. The difference with Shiva is that we don't provide for the minimum. We offer the best on all devices.

Bridging the gap between mobile and PC is a core focus for Stonetrip

How does Stonetrip plan to move forward? What do you hope to achieve?
For us, and for me, it is very simple. We want to replace Flash. Flash is used everywhere, and it is a great technology. But, there is a lot of stuff missing such as complex behaviour and physics capabilities. The future is to have a new experience on the web.

A lot of people talk about a new web 2.0, or things like 'semantic web'. We think that what is next is 'web 3D' – a completely 3D experience on the web. This is what we want to provide for. There are a community of a million developers, and we want them to use our tools.

The future of the web is on mobile and TV. In the next couple of years there will be more connected smartphones than connected desktops. This means that more people will see the web through mobile. A connected-user 3D experience is the future of the web.

Free-to-play will be important too. It has become a standard business model in Korea, and I think Europe will follow. If you are building free-to-play, you cannot use an engine that charges royalties.
www.stonetrip.com

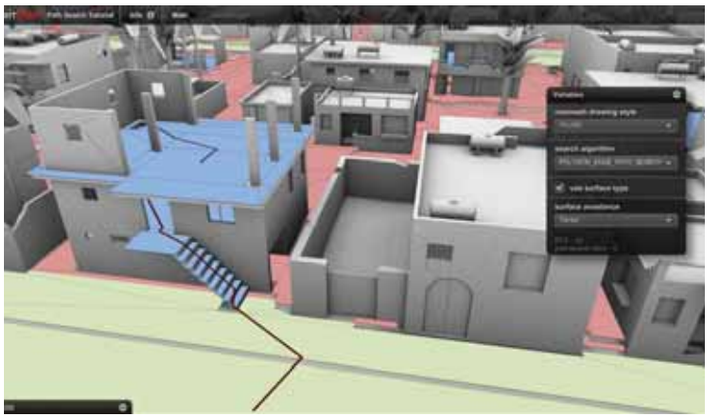
Above: Stonetrip's tech demo The Hunt, and (top) Shiva 1.9's new Device Input Simulator in action

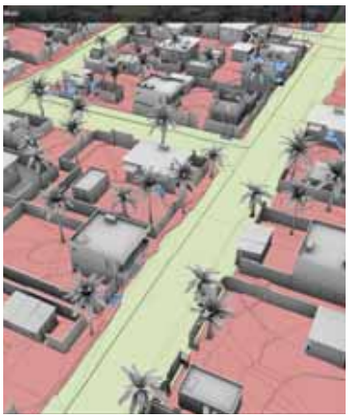
KEYRELEASE

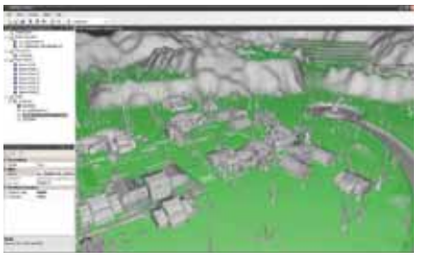
XaitMap

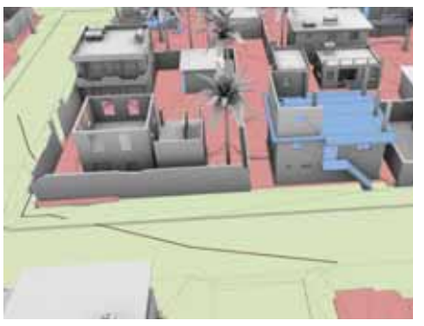
German firm Xaitment has a host of AI products dedicated to giving gamers a fight to remember. **Stuart Richardson** met with the firm's CEO Andreas Gerber to discuss the latest iteration of its XaitMap pathfinding tech…

PRODUCT: XaitMap
COMPANY: Xaitment
PRICE: On contact
CONTACT: +49 6897 600 800
www.xaitment.com









Above: XaitMap promises to deliver a fast and robust pathfinding

Good AI – the really good AI – is usually one of the last things a seasoned gamer will consider when declaring the reasons for a game being something special.

It is the mark of superior tech that, when facing off against a horde of well-armed and ugly antagonists in an otherworldly environment, a gamer will be forced into consistent and evolving plans of action by his foes. When they flank him, push him back, draw him in and attempt to corner him by every method at their disposal, there is no time for Joe Public to consider how clever the bad guys are, he spends his precious seconds just trying to survive.

Since 2004, German firm Xaitment has developed a suite of AI game tools with exactly that kind of seamless AI in mind. Founded by Doctors Andreas Gerber, CEO, and Thorsten Maier, CTO and MD, Xaitment now sells top-flight tools for nav mesh and pathfinding (XaitMap), game logic and visual debugging (XaitControl); knowledge bases (XaitKnow), NPC behavior (XaitThink) and the movement and crowd simulation tech XaitMove2.

Last month the firm updated XaitMap, ensuring that it maintains a continually relevant product in a very crowded market.

"We worked hard on a highly sophisticated algorithm for generating nav meshes that beat the pants of other middleware solutions in speed, quality and memory consumption.

> ***"You don't need any prior knowledge about path generation, you just plug our library into your game."***
>
> Andreas Gerber

"The new method speeds up the calculation process up to 10 times," Gerber explains. "We also tremendously reduced the memory consumption during the nav mesh generation process, so generating and updating nav meshes during runtime is not a problem," he adds.

The evolution of XaitMap is geared to the development community it serves. Moreover, there is a passion for the product evident in the level of detail with which Gerber describes the effort behind the update.

"In the past, developers had to build their own AI solutions because there were no other options," he says. "Then AI middleware like Xaitment came along and changed all that. Developers can use our AI tools like they would use standard tools and engines for GFX or sound. Top teams don't think about doing these things on their own anymore because it could risk their entire game project and company.

"Years ago, everyone implemented their own home-brewed AI solution, but that was always a huge risk. Projects have completely failed because of weak AI. Now teams realise that with AI middleware they save a lot of money and time while increasing quality. This has just become common sense for a large number of developers."

And Gerber is in no doubt as to why XaitMap is the pathfinding kit developers should use.

"XaitMap provides customers with fast and robust pathfinding and automatic navigation mesh generation that can be used straight out of the box.

"This means that you don't need any prior knowledge about path generation, you just plug in our library into your game, load the level geometry and that's it.

"Your team will save a lot of time and can go on to do the things that are more fun."

Long and Winding Road

Xaitment CEO Andreas Gerber is looking forward to a time when gamer focus moves away from an obsession with photorealism in graphics and on to smarter NPC interaction.

"With intelligent NPCs that learn from experience and inference, gamers will have a unique experience every time they play a game. This gives a new game not only a decided advantage over traditional games but also ensures a longer lifespan for the game, generating more revenue," he says.

"The thing that gets most players excited is the thought of a more challenging and interactive game. Players are just waiting for the day when NPCs become insightful and start predicting the behavior of human players. We're seeing a large amount of interest in our XaitThink and XaitKnow tools that provide this functionality.

"When a game studio wants to do some really new and cool game concepts, when they want to be innovative and creative and not just do the same type of game over and over again, then high-level AI is a must. xaitment stands for new ideas and innovation, with easy-to-integrate, easy-to-use tools and the best support available.

"We're building the next generation of game AI – making it possible for NPCs to learn, think and interact with their environment just like humans do."

8 December 2010

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KEYNOTE

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Kristian Segerstrale,
GM and Co-founder,
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KEYNOTE

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ngmoco

Sessions include:

Music Games: What's New? What's Next?
Paulina Bozek, INENSU

PANEL

How to Survive as a Modern Game Studio
Oli Christie, Neonplay; millsTM, ustwo;
Matthew Wiggins, Wonderland Software;
Simon Oliver, Hand Circus

As We May Game
Richard Banks, Microsoft Research

The New Video Games Industry Cycle
Ian Baverstock, Tenshi Ventures

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EPICDIARIES

UNREAL ENGINE 3 HELPS INXILE RESCUE THE DUNGEON CRAWLER

InXile's Hunted: The Demon's Forge breates life into the dungeon crawler genre

The lead creatives behind some of the most popular classic dungeon crawl role-playing games of all time – including *Baldur's Gate, Fallout* and *Icewind Dale* – are updating the genre for today's more action-oriented gamers.

InXile entertainment licensed Unreal Engine 3 technology to bring their new PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 creation, *Hunted: The Demon's Forge*, to life. The RPG, which Bethesda Softworks is publishing, focuses on cooperative exploration both above ground and in the depths of dungeons.

Brian Fargo, CEO of inXile, loved the heyday of dungeon crawl games in the '80s and '90s. He said the goal going into *Hunted* was to answer the question,'What would that kind of gameplay look like with today's technology, using the Unreal Engine, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and a really high-end PC?'

"We've been using UE3 for about five years," says Maxx Kaufman, game director at inXile. "We love the tools, and the engine has improved tremendously, especially as it relates to PS3. Epic opening up its PS3 tools was hugely helpful for making this game across all three platforms."

SAGE ADVICE

The team has relied heavily on Epic's Unreal Developer Network (UDN), the support hub for Unreal Engine licensees. Having used the service for years, Kaufman says that posting an issue online would always receive brilliantly helpful feedback.

"It's a huge help when developing a game," he explains, comparing it to having an entire network of experts at your fingertips.

"We used the majority of the features in Unreal Engine 3 to create this game," says Kaufman. "All of our cut scenes utilised Matinee. Some of the scripted events within the world also used Matinee.

He adds: "The story is very important in this game. We used Kismet and we also have our own scripting language that we created to work with Unreal."

In addition to using Epic's UE3 technology, inXile also drew inspiration from what the studio has done with its *Gears of War* games in the co-op department. In addition to offering two-player online gameplay, the single-player experience keeps both protagonists in the heat of the action.

InXile Entertainment President Matthew Findley acknowledges *Gears* was also an inspiration for *Hunted's* cover combat system. The team designed the action to mirror the leapfrogging and flanking gameplay that established the *Gears* franchise as an innovator in the shooter genre. Findley says the controls for *Hunted* match nicely with *Gears*, as well, which will make it easy for console gamers to jump right into the game.

PAST MASTERS

At the end of the day, inXile CEO Fargo hopes that *Hunted* introduces a new generation of gamers to the genre that he fell in love with in his youth.

"When I used to play all those old games, I would lose myself in them," says Fargo. "I like the action games but I also like the break in the action when you're hearing creepy sounds in the distance and you want to move forward and find out what lies further down that corridor."

Unreal Engine 3 is the perfect choice to help inXile bring back the feel of the dungeon crawler to old school gamers, while pushing it in new directions with *Hunted: The Demon's Forge*.

www.epicgames.com

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

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San Francisco, CA
November 4th – 5th, 2010

Montreal International Game Summit
Montreal, Canada
November 8th – 9th, 2010

Game Connection
Lyon, France
November 16th -18th, 2010

Dubai World Game Expo
Dubai, UAE
November 29th - December 1st, 2010

Please email: mrein@epicgames.com for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' *Unreal* engine, contact: **mrein@epicgames.com**

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www.epicgames.com/epic_jobs.html

Canadian-born **Mark Rein** is vice president and co-founder of Epic Games based in Cary, North Carolina. Epic's Unreal Engine 3 has won Game Developer magazine's Best Engine Front Line Award four times along with entry into the Hall of Fame. UE3 has won three consecutive Develop Industry Excellence Awards. Epic is the creator of the mega-hit Unreal series of games and the blockbuster Gears of War franchise. Follow @MarkRein on Twitter.

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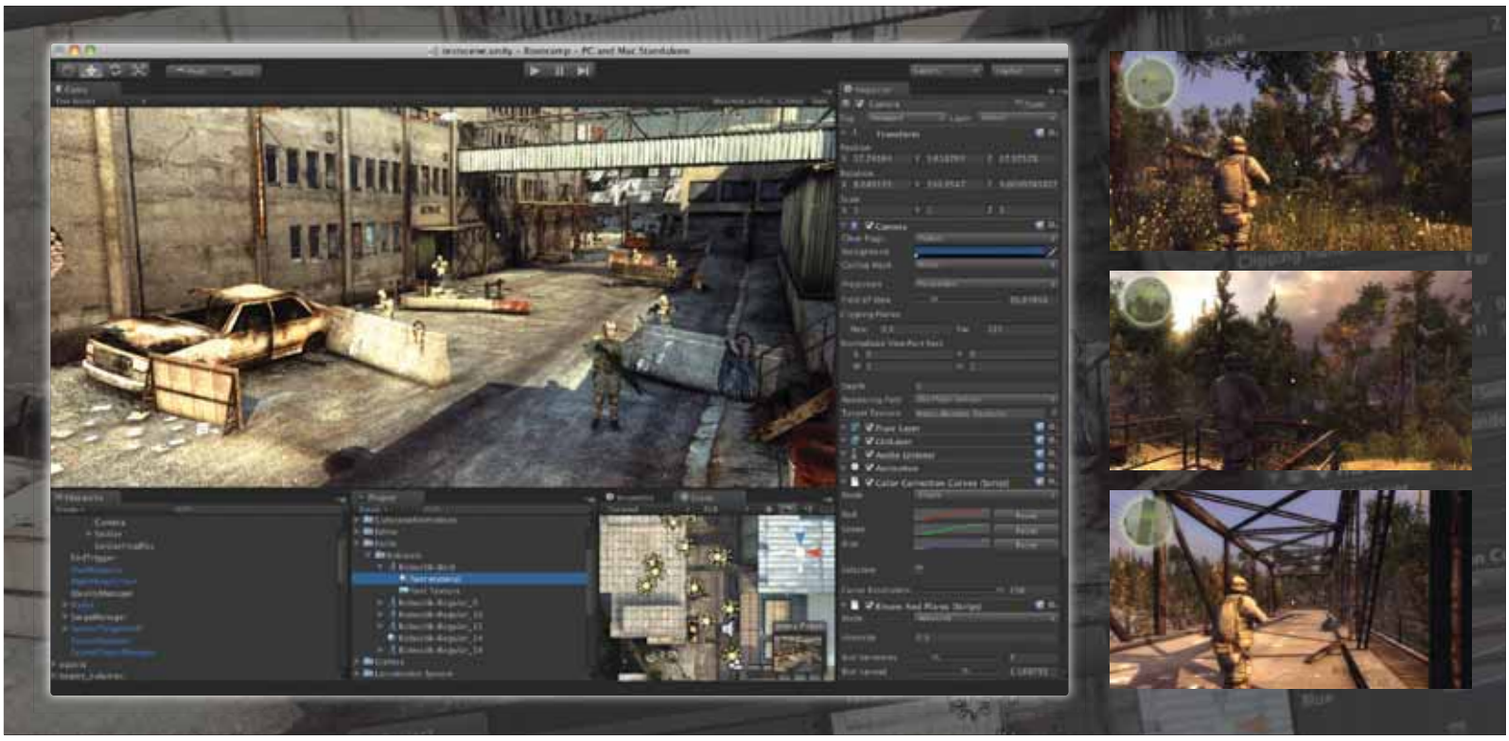
UNITYFOCUS

Booting up a new era

Brazilian developer Aquiris has created a special demo showcasing the potential of Unity 3 in the form of Bootcamp. Studio co-founder Maurício Longoni tells **Will Freeman** how he and his team designed the impressive browser game...



Above: The Bootcamp demo offers some of the most impressive Unity 3-created content yet seen

Pay a visit to the demos gallery at the Unity 3 website, and you'll be greeted by an impressive interactive showcase of the engine's new power.

A military helicopter cuts its way though sun-kissed clouds before touching down in a war torn jungle. On landing, a sincerely impressive third-person modern combat shooter unfolds. Tinker with the various graphics menus available, and you'll witness something quite spectacular within in the increasingly capable realm of the browser game. Welcome to *Bootcamp*.

"We wanted to do something unique, that simulates a real game situation both for the player and for the developers who look into it; something beautiful," states Maurício Longoni, technology and development director at Aquiris, the Brazilian creator of *Bootcamp*.

Creating the game demo, which features interior and exterior scenes, destructible scenery, varied gameplay objectives and an array of ambitious environmental effects, allowed Longoni and his team to familiarise themselves with many of Unity 3's key features.

"The *Bootcamp* demo explores a lot with the Beast Lightmapping tool," he confirms.

Thanks to Unity 3's new lightmapping functionality, Aquiris were able to apply a good quality lightning bake and take advantage of high-end blends with the realtime shadowing.

"Unity 3's lightmapping tool is absolutely amazing," adds Longoni. "It saves time as you don't need to bake the light in the 3D application such as 3DS Max. Since it's inside Unity Editor, you don't need to worry about grouping objects together in 3DS Max to optimise the atlasing of the light textures; it makes it automatically. It also reads the UV from your 3D app with your own organisation for the light textures, or it can unwrap the objects automatically if you want."

> ***"Unity 3's lightmapping tool is amazing. It saves time as you don't need to bake the light in a 3D application such as 3DS Max."***
>
> Maurício Longoni, Aquiris

Longoni and his colleagues were also able to get the occlusion culling system working immediately out of the box, boosting their performance with minimum effort. "Just integrating the occlusion culling in one of our games brought the draw calls number down from 400 to 50, with no effort," explains the clearly smitten developer, adding: "The occlusion culling system is essential when we talk about big and detailed levels, such as in *Bootcamp's* industrial scene, where we have tons of small objects, dummy enemies, the buildings and so on. A lot of things are occluded by the buildings and don't have to be rendered.

Occlusion culling makes it possible; it stores a file with the information of each visible object from each cell where the camera can be, so it doesn't render what is not seen by that camera."

What's more, *Bootcamp* allowed Aquiris to use Unity as a level editor.

"It's powerful," confirms Longoni. "It has smart snapping and takes care of the bunch of individual objects via static batching. We have also developed our own Decal system – via Unity's Extensible Editor tools – to decorate the levels and add the bullet marks.

To play the *Bootcamp* demo visit **www.unity3d.com/gallery/live-demos**.

Aquiris Knowledge

Established in 2006, Aquiris initially specialised in virtual reality projects for the aviation and architecture markets. At the start of 2008, the Brazilian outfit moved into the games space, and has currently created 13 titles, crafting branded games for the likes of Gillette, Chevrolet and Unilever.

The company was formed by art director Amilton Diesel, creative director Israel Mendes and Maurício Longoni, who serves as technology and development director. **www.aquiris.com**

HEARD ABOUT

F1 2010

John Broomhall talks to Codies' Mark Knight and Stephen Root about working in the secretive Formula 1 pit lane…

DEVELOPER:
Codemasters

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PC

Relatively few privileged sound designers ever get up close and personal with a Formula 1 racing car.

Even fewer get to satisfy their own particular quest for the holy grail of motorsport audio – a decent onboard F1 engine recording. Having worked on Geoff Crammonds' *Grand Prix* sims back in the day, this month's feature proved something of a nostalgia trip revealing that whilst the recording challenges I faced then haven't eased, the technology to manipulate F1 audio in production and at run-time has blossomed beautifully.

"You can never have enough access but opportunities are few," says Codemasters audio director Stephen Root. "The Force India team let us record their Mercedes engine and McLaren gearbox combination during shakedown testing at Silverstone before the 2010 season start.

"Later, Brawn GP – subsequently Mercedes GP – provided us another outing during testing in Jerez, Spain. Both were really helpful working with us the night before to position DPA lavs on the chassis before the car was put together – even building us custom suspension mounts to augment the bespoke cradles and windjammers we'd already created."

Nothing, however, could have prepared Root and his team for the astonishing heat and vibration generated as the car flies around the track at up to 200mph. Most of the solid state recorders tried were shaken to bits, but surprisingly the relatively cheap and cheerful Zoom H4 got the job done.

The team also recorded in test cells at Ferrari HQ in Maranello, Italy where engines on test beds are computer-operated within a controlled environment – although they found their otherwise flawless recordings were somewhat marred by inherent room reverberation, impossible to totally eradicate despite portable acoustic damping.

MAKING TRACKS

Whilst useful, the onboard recordings were far from a ready-made solution. They had to be painstakingly stitched into a patchwork of recorded assets including audio captured trackside on both corners and straights – all at different RPMs and physical perspectives.

"We use a fundamentally granular approach, analysing the constant pitch change of a rev sweep, and depending on how many cylinders in the engine work out how many cycles there are – with a cycle being an individual 'grain'," explains Codemasters lead audio designer Mark Knight. "If you need to play the sweep faster, you're cutting out cylinders and if slower, you're adding them.

> ***"The Force India team let us record their Mercedes engine and McLaren gearbox combination during shakedown testing at Silverstone before the 2010 season start."***
>
> Stephen Root, Codemasters

"Plus, we have a system to deal with timbral shift – a bit like those plugins that can shift a formant without changing the pitch and shift the pitch without changing the format. It's a mixture of tech all in one package."

Meanwhile, the audio for further AI-controlled cars employs the same system but 'quite cut down' due to the CPU challenges.

"Using newly created technology, we carefully marked every part of every track with 'reflection markers' to get the correct echo and reverb from all parts of the scenery," adds Root. "Then it really started to sound like F1."

Crackling and backfire for those ferocious F1 sonics created as the car brakes heavily into tough corners is then added. Knight expalins: "I recorded these on a nasty corner at Jerez, having tried a different section of track where I was accused of spying by one team convinced I'd been hired by a competitor to record their launch control."

Though working from a solid, mature code-base, *F1 2010* nevertheless entailed tech extensions to cope with a car that idles at 5k and revs to 18k. Throughout the project real life F1 test driver Anthony Davidson consulted to the team on car handling with the audio team tweaking the sound accordingly.

"When you see behind the scenes of Formula 1 and appreciate the engineering prowess for yourself you're hooked," admits Knight. "For a petrolhead like me to build recording systems into F1 cars – to have my arms stuck up nosecones and all sorts was a massive thrill.

"I feel we've produced the best sounding F1 game so far - and we have everything in place to improve and improve and improve as we move forward with the franchise."

Above: Codemaster's made full use of a rare chance to get audio equipment onboard a Formula 1 car

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
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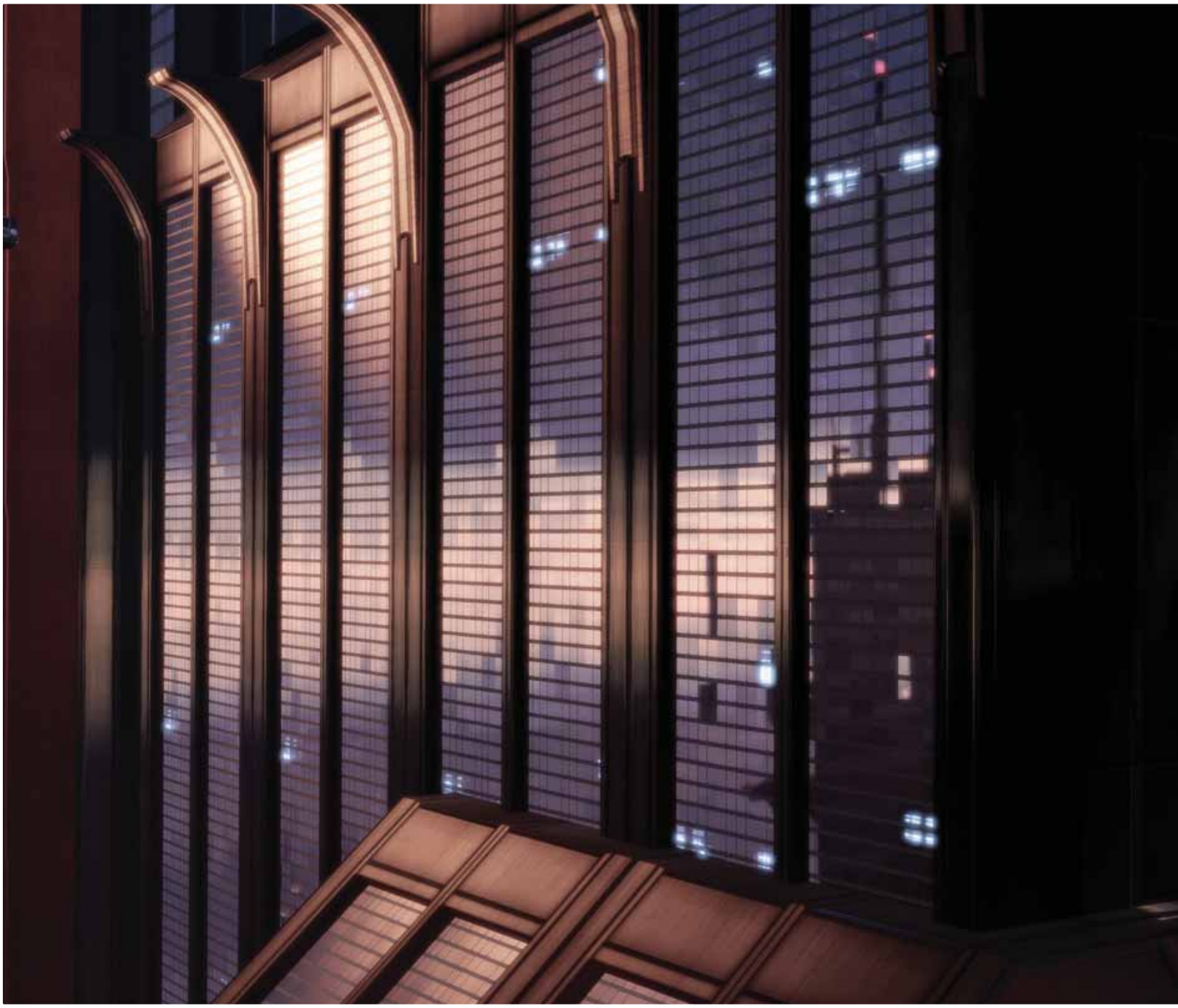
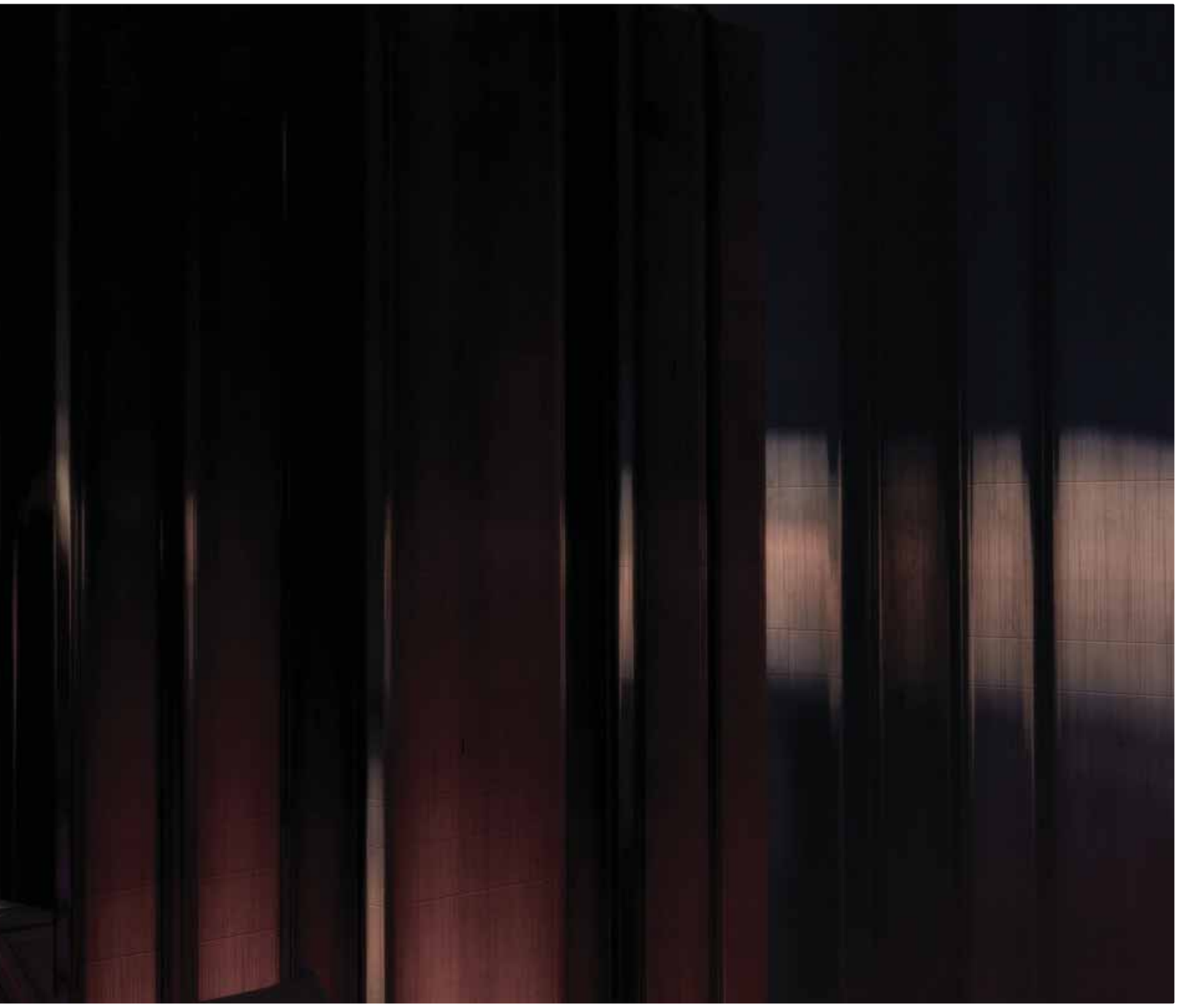
www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

DEAD END THRILLS



Duncan Harris turns his attention to a BioWare epic as he continues his ongoing series looking at the best of game art via specially-captured in-game images...



Mass Effect 2: Lair Of The Shadow Broker

Before you reach the lair of the galaxy's most nefarious facilitator in this latest episode of *Mass Effect 2*, you have to chase his deadliest agent through the bustling urban canyons of Illium, the game's dazzling metropolis.

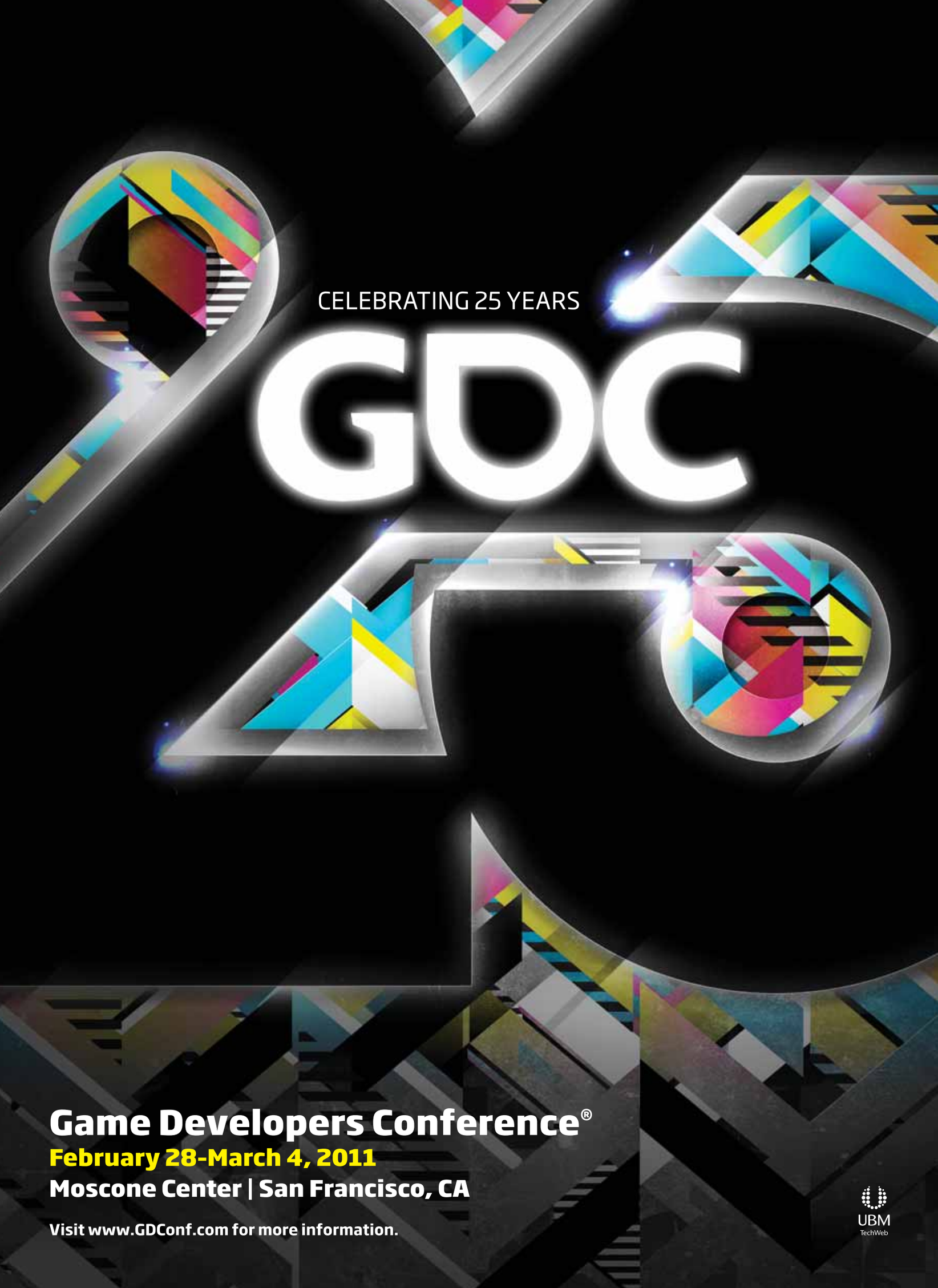
This quick sequence, inspired to no small degree by *Star Wars: Attack Of The Clones*, proves that nothing is too small or short to receive the BioWare's team's most dedicated and painstaking efforts.

Through tunnels carved into skyscrapers, jack-knifing juggernauts, and lanes of traffic soaring high above any actual roads, this grandstanding departure from the usual detective work sets the bar remarkably high for DLC everywhere.

Tools and tricks for this specially captured screenshot include modified .ini files to restore Unreal Engine screenshot and debug functions, use of free camera, and an HUD carefully removed.

Dead End Thrills is a website and resource dedicated to the art of video games. Its galleries feature over 5,500 lovingly taken, watermark-free screenshots which are free to download and use. Elsewhere, it features interviews with today's leading artists and designers.
www.deadendthrills.com

Developer: BioWare
Publisher: EA
Released: 2010
Capture format: PC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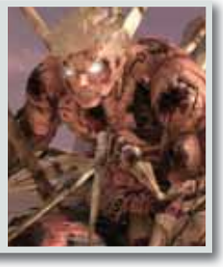

SERVICES:
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Studio News

This month: Pitbull Studio, Just Add Water, Sumo Digital, Disney Interactive Media and Kalypso

Start-up studio **Pitbull**, the group formed following the collapse of Midway Newcastle, has hired the experienced Steve Dietz as its new art director.

Dietz, who also worked at Midway Newcastle before the studio closed down, has worked in the industry for over 16 years – nine of which have been in a managerial role.

He joins Pitbull following a brief stint at Lightning Fish Games. Some of his previous projects include *The Wheelman*, *LA Rush*, *Test Drive* and *Pete Sampras Tennis*.

"I'm excited to be with such a close-knit team, and looking forward to keeping very much hands on, while growing the art team further," said Dietz.

www.pitbullstudio.co.uk

UK studio **Just Add Water** has added two new senior members to its tech team.

Steve Caslin and Paul Carter, former freelancers at the studio, joined full-time at the start of October and November respectively. Both men now hold the positions of technical leads on various, yet-to-be-revealed projects.

The hires are part of ongoing recruitment as work increases on the studio's upcoming *Oddworld* projects.

"Working with JAW over the past year or so has been a fun, now seeing the changes due to the *Oddworld* projects mean it's now the perfect time to be part of the core team here at JAW," Caslin said.

"It's not often you get a chance to work on one of the most recognised franchises in gaming history."

JAW MD Stewart Gilray welcomed the new arrivals, saying: "Having Steve and Paul join us now is perfect. We're currently completing work on the first of the *Oddworld* projects, and in the New Year we will start pre-production on the next project.

"As this project will be from the ground up we wanted to get key personal ready to jump on it from the start, and to continue expanding the team with other programmers and environmental artists."

www.jawltd.com

Sean Millard has been promoted from creative evangelist to creative director at the Sheffield-based **Sumo Digital** studio.

Millard will now serve as a liaison between the different creative groups in the studio and the management. He will be working as a member of the management team, and be responsible for managing designers and corresponding with publishing partners.

Millard has been at Sumo since 2003, and was most recently one of the key names associated with the popular *Doctor Who: The Adventure Games* developed for the BBC. He said of his new role that he new how to sell creative ideas to management.

"I understand the psychology of designers, and how to be able to interact around a board table with upper management," he said.

www.sumo-digital.com

The Walt Disney Company has made Playdom CEO John Pleasants the new co-president of its **Disney Interactive Media** division, sharing the role with former Yahoo head man James Pitaro.

The two men will be replacing Steve Wadsworth.

Disney CEO Bob Iger told Bloomerg that the new appointments were a continuation of an expansion into casual games.

DIM has lost $130m so far in 2010, making it the only unprofitable division of Disney.

"We see this as a growth area and we need people experienced in how to best operate in it," Iger said.

He went on to state his intentions to allow the new co-presidents freedom to run their respective new commitments, which for Pleasants include Playdom, Disney's Club Penguin and Tapulous. Pitaro will oversee Disney.com, Family.com and DigiSynd.

corporate.disney.go.com/wdig/index.html

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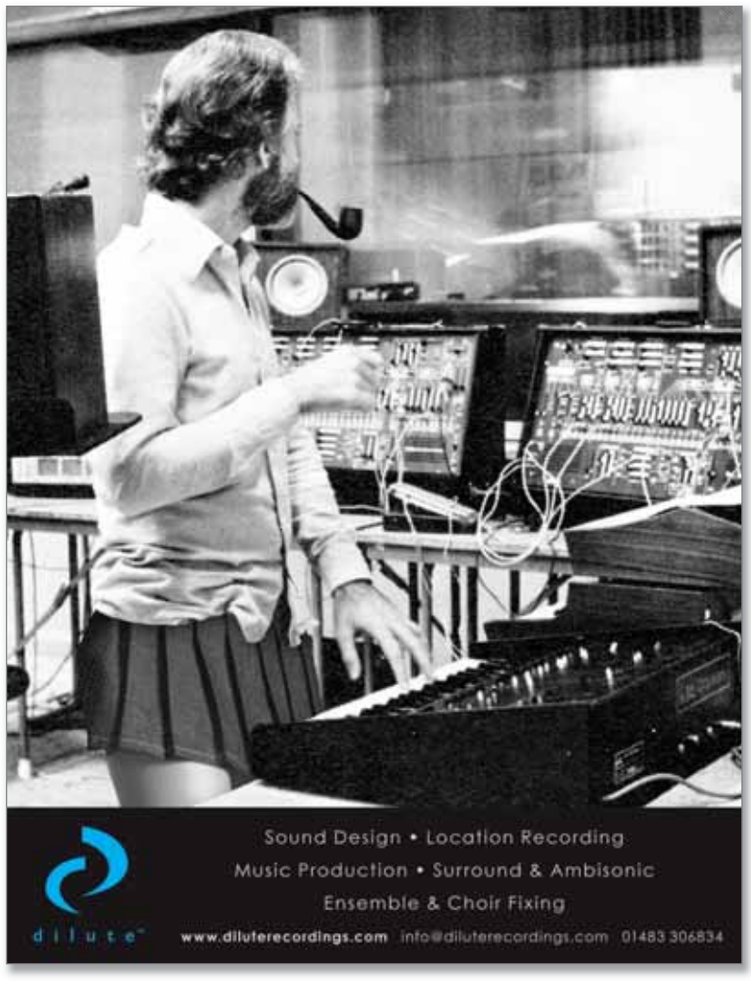
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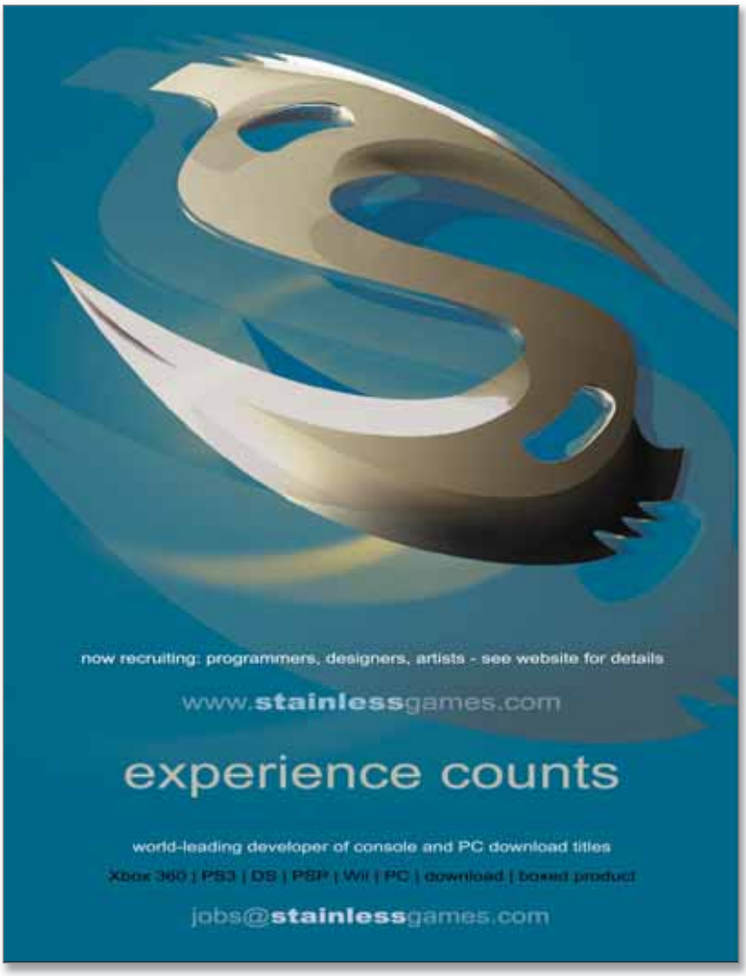
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Studio Spotlight

BIG HEAD GAMES

Big Head Games was founded by the former directors of the now defunct mobile games studio 8bit Games. The latter produced over 30 titles in the five years between its founding back in 2003 and eventual closure in 2008, including big franchise titles like *Colin McRae Rally 04* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. In 2004 it was nominated for the best handheld studio award at the Develop Industry Excellence Awards in Brighton.

The transition from 8bit to Big Head Games was straddled by development on the physics-based PSN puzzler *Elefunk*. The title was built entirely from proprietary technology and presented Big Head Games to a considerably wider audience overnight.

The momentum that came off the back of that release was a boon, and in 2009 Big Head Games started work on a massive licence in the DSi version of the *Grease* music game published by 505 Games. During the same year, the studio began launching iPhone games of the likes of *Retro Cave Flyer*, and also became licenced developers for the Nintendo consoles.

On into 2010, BHG began launching titles for the PSP and PS3 Minis, including International Snooker and yet another impressive licence acquisition in *The Terminator*.

Big Head Games' multiplatform agenda spurs from a published mission statement in which it declares its intention to develop the best possible games, and to ensure that they are each tailored to individual platforms.

The company management team today consists of Dave Vout, the business development director, whose established career has seen him work on titles as varied as the *Tony Hawks Pro Skater* series and *Batman: Dark Tomorrow*. Stefan Hopper, the technical director, has previously served as a programmer and senior programmer at Probe Entertainment and Hotgen Studios. Finally, creative director Adam Tween holds credits including the *Medal of Honor* series, and at studios of the likes of Rage Software and Hotgen.

Under this team, Big Head Games is actively seeking to take its existing iPhone IP to the console market, as well as maintaining several other projects to be specified at a future date.

Ever active in multiple sector fields, Big Head Games is likely to be a name that keeps on cropping up across the development spectrum for a long time to come.

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Tools News

This month: Capcom and UE3, Sensio and Ubisoft, Wwise 2010.2 and Trinigy's Korean expansion

In a move that highlights ongoing development culture changes in Japan, Capcom is building the upcoming action game *Asura's Wrath* using Unreal Engine 3.

Asura's Wrath, in development at Japanese studio CyberConnect2, is a high-profile project that hopes to buck these trends.

"Unreal Engine 3 was a huge factor in making *Asura's Wrath* a visually stunning and exciting game," said Capcom producer Kazuhiro Tsuchiya.

"The engine's integrated development environment helped us ramp up production speed and create a clear vision for the game at the initial development stage."

And Seiji Shimoda, project director at CyberConnect2, enumerated reasons why Unreal Engine 3 helped improve the development process.

"At CyberConnect2, we have our own development process and know-how gained from years of development. But this time we decided to reconsider our process to achieve higher quality and efficiency. We tried a lot of different options and determined that Unreal Engine 3 was a perfect solution."

www.capcom.com

Sensio Technologies has confirmed a deal with Ubisoft that sees its 3D technology included for use in *Shaun White Skateboarding*.

3D has been included in both the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 versions of the game, released October 24 in North America and October 28th in Europe.

"We know from past collaboration that Sensio's 3D format delivers the highest-quality images, as well as high reliability, ease of integration, and interoperability with leading consoles," said Ubisoft executive producer Patrick Naud.

Sensio EVP Richard LaBerge was enthusiastic about the deal.

"Ubisoft is a recognised leader in developing and distributing popular video games, and we're pleased to be working again with the company as it releases *Shaun White Skateboarding*," he said.

"We've already seen that stereoscopic 3D brings added value to game titles. By providing exceptional image quality consistently across both Microsoft and Sony platforms, Sensio 3D makes high-quality Stereoscopic 3D gaming accessible to a very broad market segment."

www.sensio.tv

Audiokinetic has launched Wwise 2010.2 – the latest version of its award-winning audio pipeline tool.

The newest edition of Wwise includes new effects, as well as an optional, separately sold library of Impulse Responses audio files.

"This new version offers more advanced DSP options," said Audiokinetic product strategy VP Simon Ashby.

"This is an important step forward for game developers and the audio professional community. Our goal is to enable audio creators to give players the best experience possible. With a growing variety of optimised add-ons available for Wwise, it's simple for the audio department to be able to articulate and realise the full potential of their artistic vision."

www.audiokinetic.com

Trinigy has opened a new sales and support office in Korea, in an action the firm states has occurred in order to meet growing demand for the Vision Engine in Asia.

"Given our history of supporting PC and console games, the Vision Engine is ideally suited to meet the needs of MMO developers in Asia, and more specifically Korea," said Trinigy GM Felix Roeken.

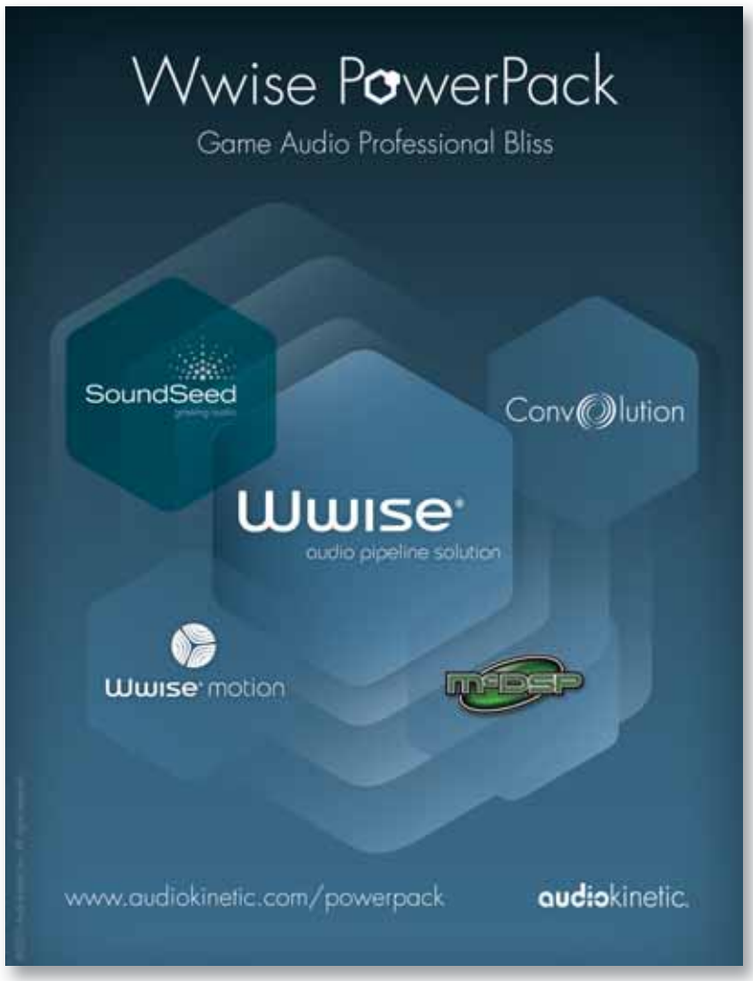
"So to better service our growing customer base in that region, we have opened a dedicated sales and support office in Seoul. We are extremely grateful to the Korean Games Conference for giving us the opportunity to showcase our technology."

Seung Hun Lee, chief organiser of the Korean Games Conference, was keen to impress his pleasure with his recent involvement with Trinigy.

"For the last several months, Trinigy has been gaining steam in our market, and now I understand why – the company and its Vision Engine really impressed the organisers and attendees. We look forward to a long and mutually beneficial partnership with Trinigy in Korea," he said.

www.trinigy.net

Audio Kinetic www.audiokinetic.com



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Tool Spotlight

FORK PARTICLE

TOOL TYPE: PARTICLE EFFECTS SIMULATION

Founded by current CEO Noor Khawaja, who brought 15 years of software development experience to his new company from studios like EA, Konami and Acclaim Entertainment, Fork Particle develops state-of-the-art particle effects simulation middleware for the video games industry.

Overseen by Noor Khawaja in California and VP of operations Tajwar Khawaja in the offshore branch in Asia, the company supplies its tools to studios working across the full spectrum of multi-platform games titles in development centres across the globe.

The two central products that the Fork Particle business has been built on, the Fork Runtime SDK and Fork Particle Studio, allow users to author special effects in the Fork authoring tool and use Fork's runtime component to simulate them in their products. The central technology within the company's Fork products, Particle Systems, has become a feature of graphics technology used in the majority of video games and graphics software today.

The stated goal of Fork Particle has been to allow developers to streamline their production pipeline for particle systems and create special effects with reduced time and effort. The firm has aimed it services at catering for a market in which it sees high-quality graphics as a key affecting factor in the total sales of games. It has stated that by taking the specialised route of seeking to improve graphics by way of real-time particle system special effects, it hopes to sate the demand for top-flight effects across the duration of growing game content.

Fork Runtime SDK, a cross platform particle effects engine for consoles and PC, features integration Fork Particle says can be generally applied within the space of a week, applied to in-house graphics and third party middleware and updated live by way of the Fork Live Tuner.

Fork Particle Studio particle effects authoring tool offers a wealth of features including 3D geometry particles, surface particle birth, keyframe animation, parameter modelling and Ageia PhysX support.

Over the past few years, Fork Particle's tech has featured in work as varied as Twisted Pixel's XBLA hit *'Splosion Man* and the recently released PC sequel *Sid Meier's Civilisation V*. Whatever work lays over the horizon for the company, it will likely span the gamut of what is on offer in the sector of tomorrow.

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Services News

This month: Cubic Motion's new animations service

UK animation outsourcing company Cubic Motion has started a new, rapid-turnaround facial animation service that is available for use at all stages of a game's development.

The service allows studios, having registered rigs with Cubic Motion, to send them audio files from which the outsourcing firm will create facial animation curves for $600 per minute 'or less'.

Cubic Motion has stated that it will seek to return data in less than 24 hours. Users will be able to access the service on a pay-as-you-go basis without contractual commitments.

"Facial animation is often treated as something too complex or too expensive to produce to a high standard through all stages of development. This means that early tests often have little or no facial animation of good quality – it's something people usually address much further into production," said Cubic Motion chief executive Dr Gareth Edwards.

"We want developers to know that outsourced facial animation doesn't have to involve complex contractual arrangements or changes to existing workflows. Cubic Motion is here to stand alongside your team at all stages of development, offering easy access to expert resources for important and time-critical animation."

www.cubicmotion.com

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Services Spotlight

UNIVERSALLY SPEAKING

Universally Speaking MD Vickie Peggs launched her services firm after breaking away from Partnertrans back in 2008. Covering a wide range of services for the video games and digital entertainment industries, the UK-based company boasts a continuing business experience of over twenty-five years.

US deals with localisation, quality assurance and audio work on a vast number of development industry projects by way of a free FTP service through which it seeks to keep the company at the fingertips of its international clients. From its studios in Reading it supplies a network of international linguists specialised in games work, as well as translators cover all generes of games and language translations. With these

Working with clients like Sony Computer Entertainment, SEGA, Codemasters, Electronic Arts, Capcom, Bethesda and THQ, the company has garned a large amount of acclaim for industry institution, gathering accolades like nominations for Best Games Service Provider at the ME Awards 2008, as well as at the Develop Industry Excellence Awards in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

capabilities it boasts the ability to supply any localisation work that a studio may require.

In terms of quality assurance, Universally Speaking works on all current games platforms, including all Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo consoles, as well as the PC and mobile platforms. In can also cover localisation QA requirements, as well as compliance checks for TRC, TCR and LOT approval and functionality QA.

The company's audio services involve a casting service that can include any world language, pre and post production services including lip syncing and voice directors and engineers to aid in the sound recording process at any stage of development.

The company has stated its desire to meet and exceed customer expectations in its service delivery, working to deadlines and a competitive pricing structure that it hopes will aid it in building strong relations with every studio on its books. In an age of increasing platforms vying for the wandering attention of gamers everywhere, Universally Speaking has also branched out successfully into the mobile sector, previously working with clients like I-Play, EA Mobile, Glu, Player X and Vivendi Mobile.

Whatever the tasks the industry may yet present it, Universally Speaking will be a company that many people come to rely on in the exciting development era ahead.

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Training News

This month: De Montfort University, London Goldsmiths, Palm OS training and Skillset's equality plans

De Montfort University opened a new, £250,000 state-of-the-art development studio opened for use in late September.

DMU vice chancellor Professor Dominic Shellard will hosted the opening ceremony for the facility, which can accommodate up to 60 students and will be used to teach those on the BSc and MSc courses in computer games programming.

The studio comprises three labs containing a 'Real D' Passive Stereo 3D system, utilising 2 HD projectors and a four-meter polarised projection screen.

Students will also have the use of Acer Predators, Dell XPSs and Alienware Area 51 ALXs; games consoles and portable games devices, including Xbox 360s, PlayStation 3s, Wiis and PSPs.

"It's exciting that students will be able to see their work in 3D. The labs are fitted with some of the most powerful games computers available, allowing students to use their creativity to the full," said head of De Montfort's department of informantics Professor Robert John.

www.dmu.ac.uk

The University of London's Goldsmiths' College has committed resources to a new motion-capture research project.

Under the leadership of Dr Marco Gillies, the project seeks to significantly improve the quality of motion capture in all forms of interactive media.

The project will create a library of behavioural algorithms based on the performance of several actors, which can then be stored, shared and built upon for individual games. Goldsmiths have said that this will make computer game characters' various body movements more consistent and realistic.

"In traditional computer games, characters are running, jumping and fighting, very physical actions, and you don't have a lot of social interaction," said Dr Gillies.

"Part of the problem is that a lot of body language and behaviour is subconscious so it's quite hard to design an algorithm for it."

"It's a really interesting project because it's combining computer science with drama and performing," Dr Gillies said.

The research is being funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Council.

www.gold.ac.uk

skillset
The Sector Skills Council for Creative Media

Creative media training body Skillset hopes to do its part in tackling the so-called gender inequality in the UK games industry.

Independent data recently showed that the number of women working in UK games industry fell from 12 per cent in 2006 to four per cent last year.

Skillset has in response signed up to the UKRC – a government-led organisation for challenging the under-representation of women in the science, engineering and technology sectors (SET).

The educational group said signing to the UKRC is "a visible commitment to increase the participation and progression of women across the creative industries".

A UKRC employer consultant praised Skillset for "recently campaigning on behalf of women in TV" after studies revealed a recent decline of female workers in the industry.

Skillset CEO Dinah Caine there's "a number of challenges ahead to improve gender equality in the creative industries, definitely the case for women in IT and technological roles.

"Skillset is delighted to demonstrate our commitment to this tackling these issues by signing the UKRC's Charter. We hope our commitment to tackling gender inequality will be taken up by more and more employers across the industries we represent. We would encourage as many of them as possible to sign up to the Charter."

www.skillset.org

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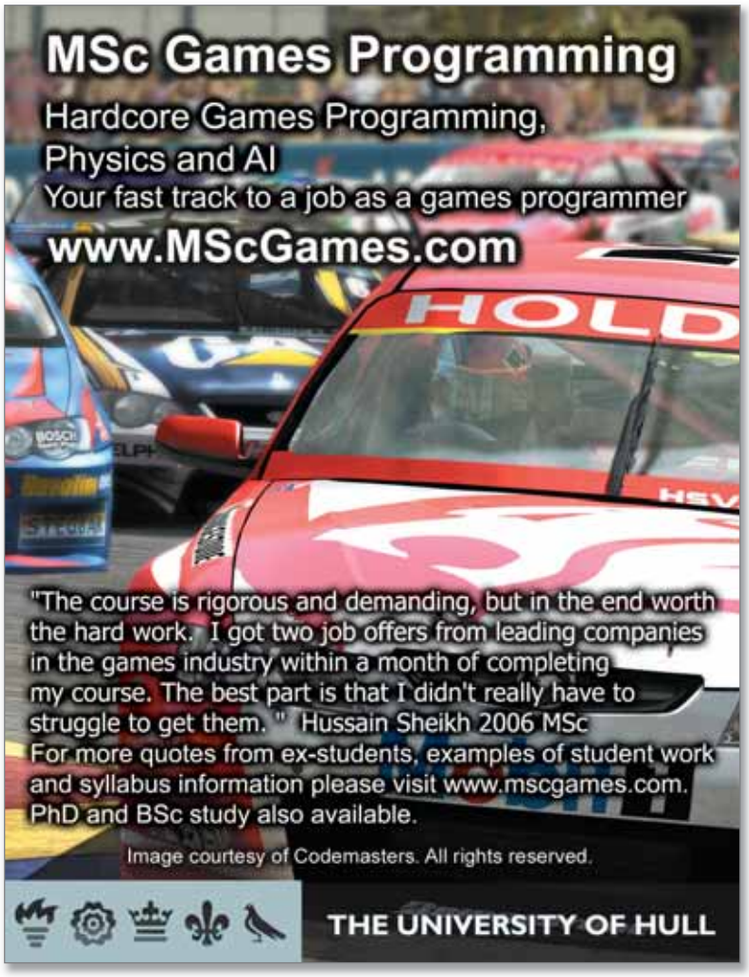
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For more quotes from ex-students, examples of student work and syllabus information please visit www.mscgames.com.
PhD and BSc study also available.
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THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

THE DEVELOP QUIZ

Britain's brightest studios last month battled it out to prove which had the most awe inspiring brainpower…

Winner: Blitz Game Studios

Last month the cream of the UK's development crop gathered at London's Sway Bar to lock horns over who boasted the most impressive intellect. On the night Blitz Game Studios emerged as champions, racking up points in rounds like 'Evil Corporations', 'Obscure Screenshots' and 'Game Quotes'. Second place was decided by a tense tiebreaker, where Lunch beat Peppermint in a clash of awful Mario impressions.

The final scores were as follows:

1. Blitz Game Studios - 49
2. Lunch PR - 47
3. Peppermint PR - 47
4. Sheridans - 46
5. Splash Damage - 43
6. Aardvark Swift - 42
7. Maverick - 41
8. Premier PR - 41
9. Firefly Studios - 40
10. Hotgen - 40
11. Jagex (Team 2) - 39
12. Big Head Games - 39
13. Playfire - 36
14. UKIE - 36
15. Jagex (Team 1) - 35
16. Vertical Slice - 32
17. Centroid - 31
18. Rocksteady Studios - 30
19. Spov – 29

2nd: Lunch PR

3rd: Peppermint PR

4th: Sheridans

5th: Splash Damage

6th: Aardvark Swift

7th: Maverick

8th: Premier PR

9th: Firefly

10th: Hotgen

11th: Jagex (team 2)

12th: Big Head Games

13th: Playfire

14th: UKIE

15th: Jagex (team 1)

16th: Vertical Slice

17th: Centroid

18th: Rocksteady Studios

19th: Spov

Develop Football Challenge 2010

develop FOOTBALL CHALLENGE 2010

Cup winners: Testology

In the same month that the UK development sector demonstrated its mental agility at the Develop Quiz, the nation's studios also proved their physical prowess at the inaugural Develop Football Challenge.

Gathering at the Barnet Powerleague in north London, 13 teams did battle in a 5-aside tournament that was hard fought by all. Some incredible goals were scored, a few players earned well-needed attention from the St Johns Ambulance sweethearts, and despite the odd boisterous confrontation, a great time was had by all.

The mighty Testology squad emerged as champions, taking home the main cup, along with Player of the Tournament and Top Scorer trophies.

Big thanks to the event sponsors SuperMassive Games and UKIE, who made the Develop Football Challenge possible.

THE TEAMS:

- Big Match Bucks (SuperMassive Games)
- Black Rock
- Bright Light
- The Creative Assembly
- Crytek UK
- Develop United (Develop and UKIE)
- Jagex Games Studio
- Rapidsource
- Sports Interactive
- Sumo Digital
- Testology
- Testronic United
- X2 Football (Exient)

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BIG MATCH STRIKER

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Cup runners-up: Rapidsource

Plate winners: Jagex Games Studio

Plate runners-up: X2 Football *(Exient)*

Player of the Tournament: Nana Penemo, Testology

Top Scorer: Ronnie Adjekwei, Testology

The Big Picture

Legendary steel wheeler Tiësto dons his 'estate agent on some R&R time' outfit for a *DJ Hero 2* press snap. From the suburban show home decor to the disinterested grin, this shot screams Ikea catalogue. In fact, it doesn't scream, it wimpers. If you're making an edgy game with grass roots connections to a decadent subculture, just remember how much a marketing team can undermine your efforts to serrate the cutting edge.

REWIND

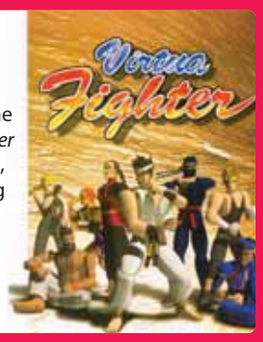
A look back at a time when things were simpler for developers

A year in video games: 1993

■ Atari stakes a claim to the first 64-bit console in releasing the Jaguar. However, it's the machine's 17-button controller that raises eyebrows – and weakens the thumbs

■ *Doom* by Id Software is released, in what many recognise as a seminal moment for the FPS. It's hard to remember there really was a time when the genre felt pioneering.

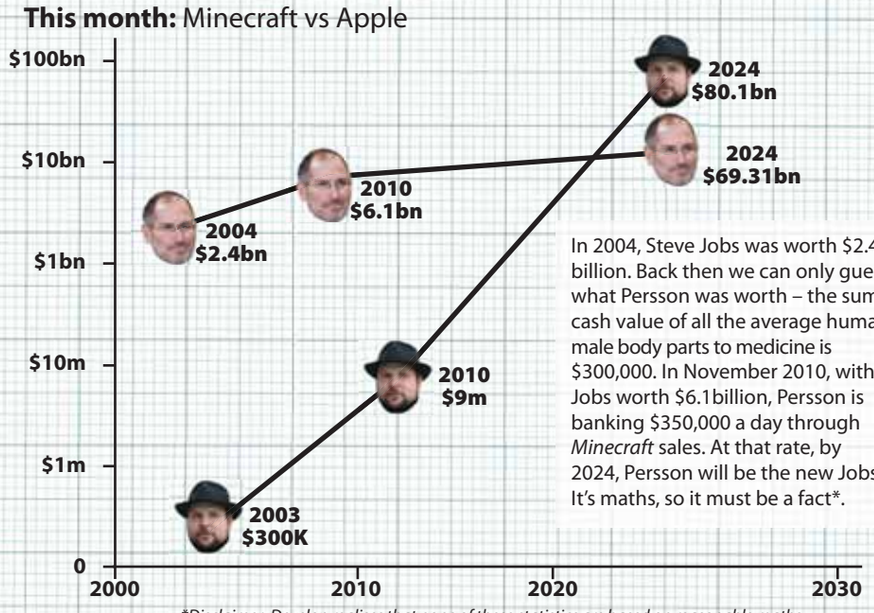
■ Sega's AM2-developed arcade game *Virtua Fighter* goes public, establishing a landmark for 3D gaming.



Wrong Numbers

Stats can be misleading. Forward-project the trends from November's numbers and the results show a misguided vision of the future

This month: Minecraft vs Apple



In 2004, Steve Jobs was worth $2.4 billion. Back then we can only guess what Persson was worth – the sum cash value of all the average human male body parts to medicine is $300,000. In November 2010, with Jobs worth $6.1billion, Persson is banking $350,000 a day through *Minecraft* sales. At that rate, by 2024, Persson will be the new Jobs. It's maths, so it must be a fact*.

Disclaimer: Develop realises that none of these statistics are based on reasonable maths

DEVIPEDIA

Dissecting the hyperbole of games development

Gamification

Gam.if.ic.a.tion // adj

What 'they' think it means:
A 'revolution in interactive design'. The act of taking the mechanics of video games and applying them to non-gaming consumer applications so as to take advantage of the 'psychological predisposition to engage in gaming'. The approach is a 'modality of computational problem-solving' that 'demonstrates the power and potential of game design'. Pricks.

What it really means:
Next to nothing. While gamification in its fundamental form is a reasonable and worthy approach to interactive design, more often than not it's used by financial service website designers trying to sound edgy, studios short on ideas good enough to be games in their own right and ill-informed agency PR execs who think it means turning film IP into a holiday season game.

■ The original Pentium microprocessor hits desktops when the P5 ships, and one of the most unlikely household names is established.

■ The Amiga CD32, 3DO and Mega CD all launch. It's *the* year for console hardware format flops.

■ Take-Two Interactive is formed. It would go on to publish the *GTA, Manhunt, Midnight Club* and *Serious Sam* series, the 2K Sports titles and *BioShock*.

develop FORWARD PLANNER

December 2010 /January 2011

Regional Focus: London Studios
Profiles of all the studios at the cutting edge of the English captial's bustling development scene.

Event:
GDC China – December 5th to 7th, 2010

February 2011

Recruitment Special
Our annual look at the jobs market includes: Advice for CVs, portfolios and interviews; per-discipline guidance on getting a promotion; the education sector; our salary survey; 30 Under 30 – the rising stars of games development; and much more.

Regional Focus: Cambridge
A look at current developments and new stories from the historic University Town.

Events:
Casual Connect – February 8th to 10th, 2011
DICE – February 9th to 11th, 2011

March 2011

QA & Localisation
The final phase of a game's production can be its most crucial step to global success – we talk to leading experts in testing, compliance and translation.

Regional Focus: West Coast USA
From Seattle to San Diego via Los Angeles and San Francisco, we examine Western game development's heartland.

Events:
GDC – February 28th to March 4th, 2011
Game Connection – March 1st to 3rd, 2011

April 2011

Mocap & Facial Animation
Every facet of character animation examined, from limb animation to lip-synching.

Regional Focus: Oxford
We examine the studios and technology companies in this key UK cluster.

May 2011

With *Develop 100* Insertion
Audio
A fresh look at the music and audio for the games sector, including in-house teams through to outsourcers.

Regional Focus: Scotland
Studios from start-ups to commercial powerhouses profiled.

June 2011

Middleware
Trends and new releases in third party tech, tools and engines.

Regional Focus: Nordic
We look at games development across Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Denmark), Iceland and Finland

Event:
E3 – June 7th to 9th, 2011

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THE FAQ PAGE: Ray Muzyka & Greg Zeschuk

Develop grills respected figures from the global development sector…

Above: Ray Muzyka (left) and Greg Zeschuk (right) set up BioWare back in 1995

What do you do?
Ray Muzyka: I'm co-founder of Bioware with Greg, and I'm general manager of the Bioware group. I work with great teams everyday, and really it's to help bring worlds to life. It's a great job.
Greg Zeschuk: And I'm the creative officer. It's fun too. A big part of my job is working on the products. While I don't make them myself I'm very involved, and I always give feedback and help our teams.

What are you working on right now?
Muzyka: We have four studios in our group. They're all doing different things, working on different projects, but as part of our group vision, which is about making the most emotionally engaging gaming experiences in the world. It's a pretty bold vision, so we try to pursue it in many different ways.
Zeschuk: There's a lot of diversity across the group, and there's 800 of us at work here. Everyday is a new adventure for us.

What was the first game you worked on in the industry?
Zeschuk: The first game for me was working on *Shattered Steel*. In fact we both worked on it. Together we wrote all of that.
Muzyka: Yeah. We did it all; the programming, writing, everything. But I'm not sure how much of mine ended up being in the final game.
Zeschuk: Didn't we write lots of the mission descriptions? We had written some incredibly long-winded stuff, like five-minute level introductions. I mean, what the fuck were we thinking? We even did about 90 per cent of the animation. We did a lot of the design work. Really, I'm not sure how much of what I did worked [laughs].
Muzyka: We were at work on *Baldur's Gate* at that time too. I was more focused on that.

> ***"There's too many games released today. Because it's very, very busy, it makes it very hard as a player to keep up."***
>
> Ray Muzyka, BioWare

What was the first game you ever played?
Muzyka: Scott Adams' *Pirate Cove* was a game on cassette tape, maybe in 1980, on the Apple II plus. It took three minutes to load, and you had to do it three times. I remember my science teacher introduced me to it, and that was the moment. I was smitten with video games for the rest of my life. After that I spent all day in the computer lab learning to program from that point on.
Zeschuk: Mine was the home *Pong* system, literally in the mid-70s. I'd have to travel five hours to my cousin's house to play, and as a kid I always wanted to make that journey.
Muzyka: Actually, I might have played a Coleco electronic game before *Pirate Cove*.

What was the last game you played? Did you enjoy it?
Muzyka: I played *Borderlands* a few days ago for a few hours. I really like that game. I've been playing *Battlefield: Bad Company* too, because I recently got my copy.
Zeschuk: I played *Army of Two: The 40th Day* most recently.

What is your favourite game ever, and for what reason?
Zeschuk: I really like *Wasteland*, which was a precursor to the *Fallout* stuff. It was one of the first open-world RPGs, and one of the first of that type, so I was just blown away by that. I think it was the game that opened my eyes to what you would eventually be able to do. It let me see the possibilities.
Muzyka: Mine was probably the original *System Shock*. It was awesome. I think I finished that game four times in ten years. I loved the way it was the first true 3D adventure. The shooter mechanic in 3D meant it was very hard to control in a way, but the richness of the world was amazing. Our IT guys hate us for it, but we use a fan website with patches to make sure *System Shock* will work on our current gen laptops.

What disappoints you about the games industry today?
Muzyka: There's too many games released today. It interesting, because it's very, very busy, it makes it very hard as a player to keep up. The releases clump up – even though that is changing a little bit.

For us, we have to play our games, play competitor's games, play other relevant games, and play the handful of games we just really want to play more of and finish. I try and play two-or three hours a night, but that's hard and it's not enough.

What do you enjoy about the industry?
Muzyka: All the great games.
Zeschuk: And it's the people. There's all the great teams, and the quality across the board. There are so many good games to play, and so many people doing so many different things. There's not really too much repetition; there's just a lot of really good experiences. It's amazing.

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